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S T O R Y

The only magazine devoted solely
to the Short Story

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The only magazine devoted solely to the Short Story

The only purpose of Story is to present, regularly, from one place, a number of Short Stories of exceptional merit. It has no theories, and is part of no movement. It presents short narratives of significance by no matter whom and coming from no matter where.

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Herr Qualla

by

Whit Burnett

Our first maid had tried our patience to the limit. So much so that we considered giving up the apartment, which was noisy, anyhow, and moving into one of those convenient pensions where someone prepares the meals, without being ordered to do so, and one does not have to wake up the maid, as we did Fanny, tell her what to do, put things into her hand, take them out again, and otherwise wait upon her to the best of ones capacity. In Vienna many of our friends had two and three maids, labor being the only cheap commodity, and we often wondered how they had time for anything else. But the pensions depressed us with their smells. And then, in some round-about way, we heard of Resi.

"The objection," said my wife, "is her age. She's about sixty. But she has one of those conscious faces--you know--she looks

auch gesagt."

"What did she say?" I turned to my wife.

"She said Herr Qualla said that too."

"Hmmmm," said I, a little less spiritedly, "well, that makes two of us, then. In any case, we are pleased to find that you know how to cook something besides Schnitzel, which are the very negation of nothing, in that, as you know, veal steaks are tasteless to begin with, and the bebreading of tastelessness is to emphasize insipidity. It is to compose a dish like Austrian mustard, which is as mild as a Viennese kiss and as harmless. Oh," said I, seizing the only remaining fork on the table, "these Viennese, with their immoderate inability to disbelieve, to criticize, to experiment, to reform, to taste, to smell, to flirt with novelty! Ach! What is sehr schön is sehr schön. They paint all their walls red. Look upon the flushed elegance of these impossible rooms! Red plush, red paint, oversized impossibility of furniture---. And Schlagobers! That white whipped cream knee deep on everything---on coffee, on architecture, on statues. . . and that statue of Strauss in the Stadtpark!

Mein Gott, Resi, never any Schlagobers! Never give us Schnitzel!"

I had grown fairly incoherent. As I calmed down, I noticed that the table had been quietly cleared. The room was in order. The short, active little old lady, her hair pulled back tight above her forehead, was standing at pleasant attention, taking in my German, optically and with her ears, in just the proper seriousness.

She said something, in the Wiener dialect which my wife grew to understand better than I, and excusing herself, withdrew to the kitchen.

"Who," I asked, "is this Herr Qualla?"

"Oh," said my wife, "you will hear a lot about Herr Qualla."

• • •

Herr Qualla, as time went on, emerged. He was dead. He had been Therese Fritzwinkel's first employer, and her only employer. He had been a well-to-do leather goods manufacturer, and he had kept several servants, of whom Resi was the cook. He emerged at odd moments, in

bed-making, for instance, because it was like this or like that Herr Qualla liked the covers tucked. And Herr Qualla, as the French say, had reason. He must have been, I thought, a heretic from the start, from the very moment of his birth, to have so excepted even to the Vienna method of bed-making. For my part, also, it is something in Austria to except to. And I grew interested in Herr Qualla. Like myself, he could not abide those feather balloons which, in winter, the Teutonic races use in lieu of blankets of wool and which, being about as wide as they are long, fail to cover a long man's neck and completely expose the feet. What with these and the fact that mattresses are divided into three equal rectangular parts, turning over on which in the dead of night causes them to fly apart and assemble around the neck and knees, leaving yawning pits between places, has often led me to believe that the Austrians not only do not know much about cookery, but even less about sleeping. With two such life elements of comfort ignored, it is no wonder, I said to

Resi, they spend their lives out, in coffee houses, drowning their despair in a tiny cup of coffee and eight or nine glasses of water. No, she said, it is no wonder, but in the early days, that is, before the War, life, like the wine, was otherwise. . .

For the sake of our new maid, whom we immediately took to bragging about all ofer Vienna, we tried our best to make our daily duties seem intelligent and understandable. We are both, my wife and I, journalists, that is, correspondents abroad for papers in America. And this means that in the middle of all meals urgent messages arrive from New York saying, "Opposition Prints Assassination King Bulgaria Gods Sake Wake Up," or long distance from Paris calls asking what about this or who's done that. This causes us to spring about, make funny noises on newfangled typewriters, search madly for telephone numbers, despatch messengers, and what is there tangible about it, anyway? Herr Qualla made leather goods, and I early realized making leather goods was something tangible. Every Christmas Resi got a new purse from Herr Qualla

and he was always bringing important people to the house, buyers from India, others from England, quite like some of the strange persons, she said, who came to eat at our place from Bucarest and Athens after we got fairly settled in the Resi regime. But making our work seem reasonable we finally gave up.

"This Herr Qualla," said my wife, "was a solid citizen. I suppose our new maid thinks we are about nine-tenths crazy."

I tested Resi with packing my bags when I had to go to Rumania and I was surprised at the efficiency with which she did it.

"Ja, ja," she said. "Immer auf der Reise! Herr Qualla was always going. Turkey. Paris. Immer Reise! And you know, Herr Chef, he always sent me postcards with sehr schönen Bildern on them."

I made a note of the standard set by Herr Qualla and from Innsbruck, on another trip, I sent a postcard of the House with the Golden Roof, on which the printer had embossed thick glittering gilt which overjoyed not only Resi but the postman as well.

"Sehr schön," said Resi, and thanked me

kindly when I returned. To Resi I was the Herr Shef, which, for a lont time I attributed to my having shown her my collection of menus which I had assembled from all parts of the world, including signed ones from Louis Barraya in Paris, and others less notable from Havana to the Golden Horn. The title meant Mister Boss, however, not Mister Chef; and I am not certain which seemed odder to me that day, that discovery, or the learning that curiously enough Herr Qualla had had something of a predilection for menu collecting himself--a passion which I had thought until then shared only by myself.

"Oh, ja," said Resi, looking interestedly at the beautifully illustrated French menu headings, "the Herr Qualla was a great collector. But mainly of the recipes. He would call for the restaurant cook and say, "Tell me now what goes in the dish which makes it so good to taste then?' And he would write down in a book and when he came back from the Reise he would come into the kitchen and say, 'Resi, we have tonight piloff a la reine Marguerite,

oder etwas. . . Ja, er war ein Feinschmecker, Herr Qualla!"

. . .

A number of things happened to us at once. But Resi, I must say, was imperturbable. At sixty, with a lifetime of work behind one, perhaps there are numerous excitements in the world which do not really very much matter. During the starvation years just after the war, she told us, she went on the street car every other day all the way to Pressburg to get fresh vegetables. I mean, there is energy sewed up in a person like that. Resi was compact with energy, hardihood, philosophy and equanimity. I could appreciate this, after coming back from Athens. I brought back boils.

Nobody I knew, in my generation, ever had boils, personally. And I was rather at a loss. When the colors, from a sunset red changed to a rather startling emerald, I lost interest in the Austrian press, travel notes, and rushing out to cafes to see people and sip coffee and sit in perspiring pain, and I toppled

into bed. We had doctors, the first of whom, in the Vienna fashion, arrived for an infection case without any thermometer. He gave my family a contemptible look when it developed we had no thermometer of our own. He said he, for his part, considered the Furunkel trivial, anyway, and departed with all the justified indignation of a specialist.

When, a day or so later, I began feverishly to pick imaginary objects out of the air, in a manner of speaking, it was Rësi who came to the rescue with an "Umschlag", or poultice, and a winding sheet, which, after my being hoist up on one end, encompassed me about the middle like the first stages of mummification.

"Well, Resi," I said, in admiration, as I was neatly swished over at two hour intervals and bound around, "we have discussed many things. Cooking and recipes. Waiters and bad wine. Gemütlichkeit and the American tempo. But I had assumed that for once, on this occasion, for instance, I had acquired something of a somewhat distinguished nature. I mean, take boils, for instance. Who has boils these days? I thought only Job had boils."

"Oh, ja," said Resi, pinning the binding, and not quite getting all my German, which is rather hard to get under the best of circumstances, "when Herr Qualla had Furunkel we did the same thing. Two weeks in bed about. Umschläge. And this same binding. We always used this."

"My heavens, Resi," I said, as she ended the operation, "what a fellow this Herr Qualla was! Telle me, though, did he get these boils, zum Beispiel, in the same indelicate position?"

"Oh, ja, gerade dasselbe!"

My affliction brought me, not unhappily, as my Scotch friend observed, once more to the Grrrrrrand Book. And I must say my ideas of Job as an all around martyr were subjectively enriched. When the Lord smote his numerous sons and daughters, Job was unperturbed; when the Lord destroyed his thousands of cattle, his innumerable she-asses and his houses and barns and outbuildings, he took it as an act of Providence. But the day his skin got nipped and he burst out with boils, he called the Lord down proper, heaped ashes all over himself, and cursed the day he was born.

In Vienna, which is a city filled with theorists, they know practically nothing about what to do with a boil. But Nature and Resi and an old general practicioner she recommended and I, we all took our courses, and at the end of a couple of weeks we could sit up sidewise with a degree of complaisance.

It was in those long days that Resi, to whom my earlier dignity had become somewhat of a memory, for there is nothing enhancing about a Sitzbad, opened her heart about Herr Qualla. He had been, of course, a fine man, but like myself, he had his ways.

It was when the beard I had grown to recover my austerity was reaching out tendrils in every which way that Resi brought out the family pictures, partly, I think, to show me what could really be done with a beard after the stage has passed when interested friends have ceased inquiring if you are in training for Oberammergau.

"It was a lovely beard," she said. "Blond, at first, like the Herr Boss's, and then, as Herr Qualla got older it went quite white.

Here is Herr Qualla and his wife--she is the one in black there. It was taken in Venice. She was afraid to get in the little boats. You know? Schön, net?"

I looked into the very eyes of old Herr Qualla, whose private umschlag sheet had bound me round. He was a tall, likeable fellow, and he had his beard done in the way I assumed my own would develop. What is called a spitz beard, only the peak is not really long. A sort of ample Van Dyke, and yet not so emphatically wedge-wise.

"This other picture was taken," said Resi, "at Baden."

"Ah, Baden," said I. "That's a lovely place."

"Ja, das hat Herr Qualla auch gesagt."

"If we could find a nice place to live somewhat out in the country away from this street noise and yet rather close to the city," said I, "that would be something like Baden."

"Ah," sighed Resi, "it was in Baden that we had the animals."

"Animals?"

"Oh, ja," said Resi, "Herr Qualla had animals. He had two flamingoes, a hedgehog, and an ant-eater."

"At Baden?"

"Oh, ja. Auch in Wien."

Resi fondly put the pictures by my bed, where I later inspected them in a melancholy leisure--they were so out of the past, of the pre-war, big hat days, when life was indolent and inventions were scarce and before the automobiles in Vienna became equipped with the most strident horns in the world, the constant blowing of which the chauffeurs mistake for driving.

But the Herr Chef's love of animals, Resi observed, a little critically, I thought, seemed to be confined mostly to dead ones.

I protested.

Well, she explained, take my numerous travels. And what did I actually bring back home with me? The mewling cat postcard from Paris which mewled when pressed--but dead, absolut tot, net? Right! And the rubber duck from Zurich which I had been unable to give away to my friend's

child in Paris, since the friend was not at home, and I had brought it back to Vienna where it sqawked when touched---schön enough, heaven knows, but tot, nicht wahr?

"That's right," said I.

"And then there's that blue rug the Herr Boss brought back from Rumania with all the flying vögel on it, net? But those birds don't feed. You should have seen Herr Qualla's flamingoes eat dried fish!"

"I like live cats," I suggested, "which is more than the Viennese do. They like only huge hounds which are constantly mussing things up."

"Ja, Herr Qualla never kept a dog. The bear was trouble enough."

"Bear?"

"Oh, ja."

The bear, it seems, had been sent to Herr Qualla from Russia, and when it arrived at the station, the Viennese baggage men phoned him and said, We have a bear down here for you. Allright, said Herr Qualla, open the cage and send him up. Open nothing, said the Viennese, do you think we have lost our reason? Come down and get your

bear. Herr Qualla went down, opened the cage, and walked up the streets of Vienna, arm in arm, said Resi, with the bear, to his home, where he kept it in the garden.

"He was a nice bear," said Resi.

"No doubt," said I.

. . .

Before we moved--and we'd planned it often enough, without, it is true, having anything else in Vienna to move into-- we had a little dinner celebration, for which Resi cooked a special gemüsepudding and at the end brought in a soufflee which was never surpassed at Pharamond's or Laperouse.

Resi had seen the place--we always took her expert advice by now--and had approved. It was a schönes kleines Häuserl, with a 17th Century court in front and a large, enclosed garden behind. It was the garden, I think, which decided us all.

"With a garden like that," I said to my wife, "it would be a shame not to have a flock of children."

We reached agreement on that, and even Resi thought that perhaps one child, at a time, would not be so much extra. We would have a nurse, of course, and whatever else you have to have.

"And that run-down fountain bowl, Resi," said I, "what do you think about that? Isn't that just the natural place for trout? Say, half a dozen aimable, beautiful troutlings?"

"Exactly," said Resi, putting down the Poulet a la Normande, "although Herr Qualla always said carp are hardier."

"True," said my wife, "carp are hardier, if my opinion is at all desired. They are so hardy that in my section of the world they don't eat them they're so hardy. We tried once, by cooking a carp between two smooth shaved planks, baking well, and then throwing the carp out the window and eating the boards. But the carp had even toughened the boards."

"I don't mean eat the fish," I said. "Keeping fish is something other than eating fish. You buy edible fish. Fish I plan keeping will be tame fish, which we shall give names to."

"Ja," said Resi, "that's what the Herr Boss means."

My wife relapsed into a maternal mood and silence.

My beard had got to the point where it could, with dignity, be stroked. I pulled gently and thoughtfully at its end. Its appearance, like the appearance of Resi, had brought about a certain change. Whereas before Resi appeared, we had both considered Vienna an almost impossible place to live in, her presence brought with it the requisite element of order, of dependability, of regularity, of strength, of persistence in the face of the necessity for bargaining; and the beard had given me a certain inner calm which made me feel at times excessively paternal. I even, in memory, forgave our first poor Fanny, and wondered in what lost circumstance she was now finding herself.

The first week in our new place I discovered a stray cat with a broken leg, which we installed in the garden and fed in the hope it would recover. It ate lustily and we were greatly encouraged, but the day before I had to go to Egypt on the English trouble it gave up the ghost and died.

My wife, like Mrs. Qualla, fond of cats,

was pained for hours, and I promised to bring back something from Egypt to take its place.

. . .

"Phooooooooeee!" said Resi, holding her nose, "was für ein Gestank!

"I know," said I, kicking the small box to the rear of the crate. "But that's inevitable."

"Ja, I know that, too," she said. "Herr Qualla had to bring the same thing with."

"Dried fish," I explained, needlessly.

"Ja. It stinks, sure, but to the vögel das schmeckt sehr fein."

When my wife came downstairs, we had the crates ready for opening, and the two birds stepped out, gently, gingerly, with that grace which only the pink-legged, long-billed African flamingo knows.

"Hmmmmm," said my wife.

Resi and I, for my wife was a little distraught, busied ourselves with the installation of the birds in the summer house.

"Ah, they go so good with the red chrysanthemums," said Resi.

My wife came down finally, again, to see them properly lodged.

"Call the sad one Qualla," she said.

Resi and I were shocked. I mean Resi was shocked. But we said nothing. Resi withdrew.

I went into the kitchen, a little later, after her.

"Did Herr Qualla have any pictures of his birds?" I asked.

We studied them together. I think our birds were bigger. But Herr Qualla seemed prouder. He stood there, handsomely, with his beard in evidence, between the two fine fowls, with Resi a few steps to one side, smiling youthfully at the camera in a half-abashed way. I was a little saddened by the faded yellow picture, and by Resi, in whose memory alone Herr Qualla was an actuality. Resi, the hard-worker who had taken Herr Qualla's advice and saved her money and then, like Qualla, himself, seen it go with war and after-war.

"Ah, well," said I, "time passes. Nicht wahr?"

"Oh, ja," said Resi, wiping an eye.

"What did Qualla call his birds?"

"Amelia and Wilhelm."

"Ours will be Annie and George."

I made numerous sketches of the two slender birds, which to me seemed the vivification of what the English critic calls "significant form." They thrived, strutted and pranced about, tilted their long bills, gazed, entranced, at the hardy carp and the few lean trout in the fountain pool and made themselves almost at home.

And then the summer suddenly ceased. One day it was fair and fine, with that brisk clarity of air which brings out the detail of Vienna at its best, and the next day there was snow and November and rain and gloom.

The flamingoes, always rather unoriented, shivered in the summer house, into which each night Resi or I had to lead them, since they never seemed to know quite where to go when it got dark. And it was necessary for us to think of winter quarters.

Resi suggested the laundry room, which was where Herr Qualla had housed his own in winter. And then occurred the catastrophe. Flamingoes are delicate birds. Herr Qualla's beautiful

male had one day been pounced upon by a strange dog and bitten to death. I can imagine the grief of old Herr Qualla. I would have shot the cursed dog. Resi would recount the incident in a tone of lowered timbre, with almost as much suppressed sorrow in her voice as in the death-bed scene of Mrs. Qualla herself.

What happened to our flamingo--Annie, the female--was something which at first glance appeared humorous. She got a fishbone in her throat. It was plainly evident, but, Resi said, impossible to reach. Annie coughed. Choked. And Resi, her pulled-back hair a little dishevelled from attempting to massage the bird's neck, and from holding her grey head while she muttered periodically, "Jesus Maria! Jesus Maria!" puffed heavily upstairs to the dining room for help.

"Der Vogel! Der Vogel!"

When we reached the poor bird, it had ceased to breathe. It had strangled.

. . .

It was rather a trying winter, that one. It is all very well to have a fatherly beard,

but it is quite another thing waiting to be a father. We all waited so I would be a father, but it was somehow futile. There were no children.

It was a little melancholy, sitting inside the rather large house, looking out on the snowy garden, the fish-pond frozen, the summer house buried in whiteness, and surrounded by the silence of our selves, and our interest gone even in chess.

"Well, Herr Qualla had no children," I said, one night.

"I know," said my wife, quickly. "And I have heard enough about Herr Qualla."

She was silent for a time.

"Besides, one never hears anything about Frau Qualla," she added. "Herr Qualla this, and Herr Qualla that. . ."

"They must have been an odd couple," said I, "old Herr Qualla and his wife in black. . afraid of a gondola. Resi told me today he brought back once from Budapest a live duck in his pocket."

"Hmmmmm."

The flamingo downstairs in the washroom, George, was making a strange noise. Resi had

opened the door. He was perhaps pining for his dead mate. Poor George, I thought.

"A duck," I said. "A duck might fit very well next summer on the fish-pond. We never thought of having a duck."

My wife did not answer. She was reading. For months she had been a little strange, a little moody, which I attributed in part to the fact that lately we had neither of us done much work. The money her folks sent her out of the settlement of the estate had caused us to take things easier. It had been perhaps a mistake--she brooded.

"What are we having for dinner tonight," she asked.

"Well, I popped in the kitchen on the way up, and Resi's doing a special Schnitzel. I didn't use to like Schnitzel, you know, but Resi has a way about making them. . ."

"Damn," said my wife.

"Damn?" said I. "Why, you haven't sworn for years!"

"I know," said my wife, bitterly. "Damn, that's the damn trouble. Damn! Damn! This town is changing me. Look! I'm even getting

about. Me! And I was always underweight. And we're both getting lazy. Just like the Viennese. Why, I can feel the föhn wind even in the winter."

She paused.

"It's the winter," I offered. "There wasn't any sun today."

"No, it's everything. Everything! This town. This house. Us. You. Resi. Everything. . . We must get out of here. I am going to America!"

Resi came up with the dinner. It was really excellent. She had found some veal, which nearly melted in the mouth and she had browned the bread crumbs to a delicious crispness, which, after all, the Viennese know how to do.

We played a little chess in the evening. Resi dropped in for a few moments, at the middle game, and respectfully asked what opening it had been.

"Queen's pawn," replied my wife.

"Ah, ja, sehr gut. Herr Qualla used it--immer!"

In a week or two my wife and I took a

little trip to the Dalmatian coast, where, of all places, we found a Siamese cat with pure blue eyes. We brought it back with us.

The trip did us good, and my wife's nervousness completely disappeared. We have not yet had any children, but there is probably plenty of time. We are still hoping. On the Adriatic my wife let her hair grow long in the back, and the effect is quite charming, and frequently her accent has been taken for genuine Viennese.

When we got back, Resi was beaming. She is the loyalest of the loyal. We brought her some views of the Jugoslavian coast and when she saw the strange kitten, it brought tears to her eyes.

"Immer dasselbe," she said, "wie Herr Qualla."

She enjoys the best of health, and thank God for that. Without Resi we probably wouldn't know what to do. It was she who nursed George through that first tough winter, and we can go away at any time, leaving the house for weeks, and be perfectly sure that she will take care of the house, and the duck, and the fish and all, just as well as we would.

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R E S T C U R E

by

Kay Boyle

He sat in the sun with the blanket about him, considering, with his hands lying out like emaciated strangers before him, that today the sun would endure a little longer. Certainly it would survive until the trees below the terrace effaced it, towards four o'clock, like opened parasols. A crime it had been, the invalid thought, turning his head this way and that to have ever built up one house before another in such a way that one man's habitation cast a shadow upon another's. The whole sloping coast should have been left a wilderness with no order to it, stalked and leafed with the great strong trunks and foliage of these parts. Cactus plants with petals a yard wide and yucca tongues as thick as

elephant trunks were sullenly and viciously flourishing all about the house. Upon the terrace had a further attempt at nicety and precision been made: there his wife had seen to it that geraniums were potted into the wooden boxes that stood along the wall.

From his lounging chair he could reach out and, with no effort beyond that of raising the skeleton of his hand, finger the parched stems of the geraniums. The south, and the Mediterranean wind, had blistered them past all belief. They bore their rosy top-knots or their soiled white flowers balanced upon their thick Italian heads. There they were, within his reach, a row of weary washerwomen leaning back from the villainous descent of the coast. What parched scions had thrust forth from their stems now served to obliterate in part the vision of the sun. With arms akimbo they surrounded him: thin burned Italian women with their meagre bundles of dirty linen on their heads. One after another, with a flicker of irritation for his wife lighting his eye, he fingered them at the waist a moment, and then snapped off each stem. One after another he broke their stalks in two and

dropped them away onto the pavings beneath his lounging chair. When he had finished off what plants grew within his reach, he lay back exhausted, sank, thin as an archer's bow, into the depths of his cushions.

"They kept the sun off me," he was thinking in absolution.

In spite of the garden and its vegetation, he would have the last drops of sun. He had closed his eyes, and there he lay looking straight ahead of him into the fathomless black pits of his lids. Even here, in the south, in the sun even, the coal-mines remained. His nostrils were sick with the smell of them and on his cheeks he felt lingering the slipping mantle of the English fog. He had not seen the mines since he was a young man, but nothing he had ever done between would alter them. There he sat in the sun with his eyes closed, looking into their depths.

Because his father had been a miner, he was thinking, the black of the pits had put some kind of blasphemy on his own blood. He sat with his eyes closed looking directly into the blank awful mines. Against their obscurity he set the

icycles of one winter when the war was on, when he had spent his twilights seeking for pinecones under the tall trees in the woods behind the house. In Cornwall. What a vision! How beautiful that year, and many other years, might have been had it not been for the sour thought of war. Everytime his heart had lifted for a hillside or a wave, or for the wind blowing, the thought of the turmoil going on had beset and stricken him. It had lain like a burden on his consoience every morning when he was coming awake. The first light moments of day coming had warned him that despite the blood rising in his body, it was no time to rejoice. The war. Ah, yes, the war. After the mines, it had been the war. Whenever he had believed for half a minute in man, then he had remembered that the war was going on.

For a little while one February, it had seemed that the colors set out in Monte Carlo, facing the Casino, would obliterate forever the angry memories his heart had stored away. The great mauve, white, and deep royal purple bouquets had thrived a week or more, as if rooted in his eyes. Such banks and beds of richly petalled flowers set thick as thieves or thicker on the

cultivated lawns conveyed the wish. Their artificial physiognomies masked the earth as well as he would have wished his own features to stand guard before his spirit. The invalid lifted his hand and touched his beard. His mouth and chin, he thought with cunning satisfaction, were marvelously concealed.

The sound of his wife's voice speaking in the room that opened behind him onto the terrace roused him a little as he sat pondering in the sun. She seemed to be moving from one long window to another; arranging flowers in the vases, for her voice would come across the pavings, now strong and close, now distant as if turned away, and she was talking to their guest about some sort of shrub or fern. A special kind, the like of which she could find nowhere on the Riviera. It thrived in the cool brisk fogs of their own land, she was saying. Her voice had turned towards him again and was ringing clearly across the terrace.

"Those are beautiful ones you have there now," said the voice of the gentleman.

"Ah, take care!" cried out his wife's voice, somewhat dimmed as though she had again turned towards the room. "I was afraid you had

pierced your hand," she said in a moment.

When the invalid opened his eyes, he saw that the sun was even now beginning to glimmer through the upper branches of the trees, was lolling along the prosperous dark upper boughs as if in preparation for descent. Not yet, he thought, not yet. He raised himself on his elbows and scanned the sky. Scarcely three-thirty, surely, he was thinking. The sun can't be going down at once.

"The sun can't be going down yet awhile, can it?" he called out to the house.

He heard the gravel of the pathway sparkling and spitting out from under the soles of their feet as they crossed it, and then his wife's heels and the boots of the guest struck and advanced across the paving stones.

"Oh, oh, the geraniums--" said his wife suddenly by his side.

The guest had raised his head and stood squinting up at the sun.

"I should say it were going down," he said after a moment.

He had deliberately stepped before the rays of it and stood leaning back

against the terrace-wall. His solid grey head had served to cork the sunlight. Like a wooden stopper, thought the invalid, painted to resemble a man. With the nose of a wooden stopper. And the sightless eyes. And the creases when he speaks or smiles.

"But think what it must be like in Paris now," said the gentleman. "I don't know how you feel, but I can't find words to say how grateful I am for being here." The guest, thought the invalid as he surveyed him, was very conscious of being a guest--of accepting meals, bed, tea, society--and his smile was permanently set beneath his nose.

"Of course you don't know how I feel," said the invalid. He lay looking sourly up at his guest. "Would you mind moving out of the sun?" As the visiting gentleman skipped out of the way, the invalid cleared his throat, dissolved the little pellet of phlegm which had leapt to being on his tongue so as not to spit before them, and sank back into his chair.

"The advantage--or rather <u>one</u> of the advantages of being a writer," said the visiting gentleman with a smile, "is that he can settle down wherever the fancy takes him. Now a

publisher--"

"Why be a publisher?" said the invalid in irritation. He was staring again into the black blank mines.

His wife was squatting and stooping about his chair, gathering up in her dress the butchered geraniums. She said not a word, but crouched there picking them carefully up, one by one. By her side had appeared a little covered basket, and within it rattled a pair of castanets.

"I am sure I can very easily turn these into slips," she said gently, as if speaking to herself. "A little snip in the right place and they'll be as good as new."

"You can make soup out of them," said the invalid bitterly. "What's in the basket," he said, "making a noise?"

"Oh, a langouste!" cried out his wife. She had just remembered. "We bought you a langouste, alive, at the Beausoleil market. It's as lively as a rig!"

The visiting gentleman burst into laughter. The invalid could hear him gasping with enjoyment by his side.

"I can't bear them alive," said the invalid testily. He lay listening curiously to the animal rattling his jaws and clawing under the basket's lid.

"Oh, but with mayonnaise!" cried his wife. "Tomorrow!"

"Why doesn't Mr. What-do-you-call-him answer the question I put him?" asked the invalid sourly. His mind was possessed with the thought of the visiting man. "I asked him why he was a publisher," said the invalid. What a viper, what a felon, he was thinking, to come and live on me and not give me the satisfaction of a quarrel! He was not a young man, thought the invalid, with his little remains of greying hair, but he had all the endurance and patience of a younger man in the presence of a master. All the smiling and bowing, thought the invalid with contempt, and all the obsequious ways. The man was standing so near to his chair that he could hear his breath whistling through his nostrils. Maybe his eyes were on him, the invalid was thinking. It gave him a turn to think that he was lying there exposed in the sun where the visitor could examine him pore by pore. Hair by

hair could the visitor take him in and record him.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said the gentleman. "I'm afraid I owe you an apology. You see, I'm not accustomed to it."

"To what?" said the invalid sharply. He had flashed his eyes open and looked suspiciously into the publisher's face.

"To seeing you flat on your back," said the gentleman promptly.

"You covered that over very nicely," said the invalid. He clasped his hands across his sunken bosom. "You meant to say something else. You meant to say DEATH," said the invalid calmly. "I heard the first letter of it on your tongue."

He lay back in his chair again with his lids fallen. He could distinctly smell the foul fumes of the pits.

"Elsa," he said, as he lay twitching in the light, "I would like some champagne. JUST BECAUSE," he said sitting up abruptly, "I've written a few books doesn't mean that you have to keep the truth about me to yourself."

His wife went off across the terrace, leaving the two men together.

"Don't make a mistake," said the invalid smiling grimly. "Don't make any mistake. I'm not quite finished. Not QUITE. I still have a little more to write about," he said. "Don't you fool yourself, my dear."

"Oh, I flatter myself that I don't," said the gentleman agreeably. "I'm convinced there's an unlimited amount still to come. And I hope to have the honor of publishing some of it. I'm counting on that, you know." He ended on a playful note and looked coyly at the invalid. But every spark of life had suddenly expired in the ill man's face.

"I didn't know the sun would be off the terrace so soon," he said blankly. His wife had returned and was opening the bottle, carefully and without error, with the end of her pliant thumb. The invalid turned on his side and regarded her: a great strong woman whom he would never forget, never, nor the surprisingly slim crescent of her flexible thumb. All of her fingers, he lay thinking as he watched her, were soft as skeins of silk, and tied in at the joints and knuckles by invisible satin bands of faintest rose.

And there was the visiting gentleman hovering about her, with his oh-let-me-please-mrs-oh-do-let-me-now. But her grip on the neck of the bottle was as tenacious as a snake's. She lifted her head, smiled, and shook it at their guest.

"Oh, no," she said, "I'm doing beautifully."

Just as she spoke the cork flew out and hit the gentleman square in the forehead. After it streamed a geyser of purest gold.

"Oh, oh, oh," cried the invalid. He held out his hands to the golden spray. "Oh, pour it here!" he cried. "Oh, buckets of it going! Oh, pour it over me, Elsa!"

The color had flown into Elsa's face and she was laughing. Softly and breathlessly she ran from glass to glass. There in the stems played the clear living liquid, like a fountain springing upward. Ah, that, ah, that, in the inwards of a man, thought the invalid joyfully! Ah, that, springing again and again in the belly and heart! There in the glass it ran, cascaded in needlepoints the length of his throat, went

whistling to his pulses.

The invalid set down his empty glass.

"Elsa," he said gently, "could I have a little more champagne?"

His wife had risen with the bottle in her hand, but she looked doubtfully at him.

"Do you really think you should?" she asked.

"Yes," said the invalid. He watched the unbelievably pure stuff flowing out all over his glass. "Yes," he said. "Of course. Of course, I should."

A sweet shy look of love had begun to arch in his eyes.

"I'd love to see the langouste," he said gently. "Do you think you could let him out and let me see him run around?"

Elsa set down her glass and stooped to lift the cover of the basket. There was the green armoured beast lifting its eyes, as if on hinges, to examine the light. Such an expression he had seen before, thought the invalid immediately. There was a startling likeness in those small audacious eyes. Such a look had there been in his father's eyes: that look, and the long smooth

mustaches drooping across the wee clefted chin, gave the langouste such a look of his father that he exclaimed aloud.

"Be careful," said Elsa. "His claws are tied, but still--"

"I must have him out," said the invalid. He gripped the langouste firmly about the hips. He looks like my father, he was thinking. I must have him out where I can see.

In spite of its shackles, the animal contrived to wave his wide pinions in the air as the invalid lifted him up and set him on the rug across his knees. There was the same line of sparkling dew-like substance pearling the langouste's lip, the same weak disappointed lip, like the eagle's lip, and the bold suspicious eye. Across the sloping shoulders of the beast lay a sprinkling of brilliant dust, as black as coal dust and quite as luminous. Just as his father had looked coming home at night, with the coal dust showered across his shoulders like a deadly mantle. Just such a deadly cloak of quartz and mica and the rooted roots of fern. Even the queer blue toothless look of his father about the jaws. The invalid took another deep swallow of champagne and let it seep

quietly through his flesh and blood. Then he lifted his hand and stroked the langouste gently. You've never counted, he was thinking mildly. I've led my life very well without you in it. You better go back to the mines where you belong.

When he lifted up the langouste to peer into his face, the arms of the beast fell ludicrously open as if he were seeking to embrace the ailing man. He could see his father very well in him, coming home with the coal dirt all over him in the evening, standing by the door that opened in by halves, opening first the upper half and then the lower, swaying a little as he felt for the latch of the lower half of the door. With the beer he had been drinking, or the dew of the Welsh mist shining on his long mustaches. The invalid gave him a gentle shake and set him down again.

I got on very well without you, he was thinking. He sipped at his champagne and regarded the animal upon his knees. As far as I was concerned. As far as I was concerned you need never have been my father at all. Slowly and warily the wondrous eyes and feelers of the beast

moved in distrust across the invalid's lap and bosom. A lot of good you ever did me, he was thinking. As he watched the langouste groping about as if in darkness, he began to think of the glowing miner's lamp his father had worn strapped upon his brow. Feeling about in the dark and choking to death underground, he was thinking impatiently. I might have been anybody's son. The strong shelly odour of the langouste was seasoning the air.

"I've got on very well without you," he was thinking bitterly. From his wife's face he gathered that he had spoken aloud. The visiting gentleman looked into the depths of his glass of champagne.

"Don't misunderstand me," said the guest with a forbearing smile. "I'm quite aware of the fact that, long before you met me, you had one of the greatest publics and following of any living writer--"

The invalid looked in bewilderment at his wife's face and at the face of the visiting man. If they scold me, he thought, I am going to cry. He felt his underlip quivering. Scold me! he thought suddenly in indignation. A man with a

beard! His hand fled to his chin for confirmation. A man with a beard, he thought with a cunning evil gleam narrowing his eye.

"You haven't answered my question," he said aggressively to the visitor. "You haven't answered it yet, have you?"

His hand had fallen against the hard brittle armour of the langouste's hide. There were the eyes raised to his and the canny feelers lifted. His fingers closed for comfort about the langouste's unwieldy paw. Father, he said in his heart, father, help me. Father, father, he said, I don't want to die.

...

P E N N Y W H I S T L E

By

Oliver Gossman

I remember that New Year, said the widow Kidd, because we had snow. That's rare with us. We don't go in much for diversions hereabouts.

And those houses opposite were'nt there then. That was a field, the ten-acre field that lay all aslant uphill to the sky-line. To the right you could just see the tops of the trees around Craig's farm.

Everything was white that afternoon. A good three o'clock it must have been, for I had my early tea on the hob. And it was going to be whiter, so to speak, for the sky was heavy and it was trying to snow again: that powdery snow. My windows were banked up white like my pillows here are now. And there

were bits of snow, as big as your fist, on every one of the knobs along the top of my railing out there.

Being as deaf as you like when I want my own peace and my kettle's singing at a good fire, I wouldn't have heard that old man at all if I hadn't thrown up the side window to break up a bit of bread I didn't just need for any scary birds that might see it.

And there he was, the only human in sight. If human he is, thinks I.

But human enough he was in all conscience. Just a beggar man and a very old one at that. He had a beard, and a muffler, and a long coat, and a measly old hat, and he was standing there all on his lonesome, playing a penny whistle with his aged fingers.

Now I'm not fond of music myself much. And if there's one thing I can't abide it's Christmas tunes out of season and played just for money. And he wasn't even playing a Christmas tune. It was "Scots wha hae," if I'm a judge.

What's he doing that for, thinks I?

Those houses opposite weren't there then; there weren't any windows for folk to throw pennies to him from, wrapped up in paper.

Then and there thinks I in my heart: "You old vagabond!" For no sooner did he see that open window than he put down his tin whistle and began to wrestle with my gate, shoving it back against the snow.

"So it's me he's making for!" thinks I.

There he stood, right in the middle of my front plot. A beggar man and an old one: though you never can be sure. But you have a right to shut your door on an unknown stranger: you can't shut a wee bit window on anybody. At least not in the daytime, to my mind. And what with the frost and the snow and the cold, and what with his playing the whistle, it looked like the spittle was freezing on his beard.

So I said: "I'm going to give you a sixpence," says I; "it's not for a widow woman to grudge cheer to an old man. And youu'll be all the better," I says, "for a dish of tea."

He was a very old beggar man. But he couldn't see, not from where he was, the man's

hat and coat and walking stick I've always kept prominent in the lobby-stand all these years I've been a widow. So for safety's sake I says: "You might have come inside for it if only my man were come home from his work."

He was too old a man to notice that mistake of mine about a widow woman having a man expected home from his work.

"The Lord reward ye, ma'am," he says. "I'm sure I'm much obliged to you."

He was wearing knitted mittens and it seemed to do him good to hold the hot cup of tea in his meagre hands while he blew on the tea itself. Then I had a notion of my own, and with his second cup I asks him if he would like a drop of rum in it.

"I'm not a man of dissipation, ma'am," he says, "but you offer me a cinder in me tea and I thank you kindly for it."

That spirit lit up his aged cheeks, I do declare. "It goes round inside me," he says, "like wedding-bells."

"Here now," I said, leaning out, and I got my sleeve all touched up with snow, "you

just stuff this bread and bacon, cold though it is, into that pocket."

"Not that one, ma'am," he says, "that one's got no bottom to it. This other's my pocket for things. And there's one soul will pray for you tonight, lady; if that's not presuming."

Now I declare, there he was at the gate and he was so very old a man he wouldn't have remembered it if I hadn't remembered it suddenly myself, that all the time I'd forgotten to give him it.

"Your sixpence!" I cries. "Are you daft?"

And what do you think, Mrs. Kidd asked, my old Father Christmas does after that? He stops dead in the middle of the roadway, with the snow falling on his shoulders, and begins to set up his "Scots wha hae" again!

So I shouts:

"Not another note for me, old man! You get on your ways while there's light to see by."

And down goes my window to keep the cold out.

But what way do you think that old man

takes? Along our road? Not him.

No; he went through a break in the fence and into the ten-acre field that was lying out there all white up to the skyline.

Now bother, thinks I, what is the old zany going that way for? And if so, why doesn't he go round by the farm road?

True for you, says I to myself, the snow on the field is not yet all but ankle-deep; whereas, with the north wind that brought the fall in the morning and last night, the ditches of that road must be solid drifts that might bury that old man once and for all.

But why that way at all? I keeps wondering. And I keeps watching him. The snowfall wasn't so thick and I could still see him when he had got more than half-way up. Yet the snow was thick enough, and thinks I, before he gets to the top his first footprints will be all white again. Then "True for you again, sirs," says I; "if it's not Craig's farm he's going to, or perhaps the ploughman's cottage beyond that,"

For it's farms and farmens that sometimes still have room for a very old man like

that when all your rows of semi-detached villas, in the nature of things, can't accommodate him.

Widows are a special case, added Mrs. Kidd.

Anyway, he didn't go to the farm. The last glimpse I had of him he was going up to the left to where the hill road branches off, if he could find it. Then it struck me what he might be up to.

"Susan," thinks I, "that old man knows as well as you that apart from the wintry weather that's the shortest cut -- by the refuse destructor that used to be a copper mine, through the pine copse and past the cemetery -- to the old turnpike road where Smithston is. For Smithston is our poor's-house; for the matter of that it's our asylum as well. I had my second notion that day.

"Lord!" says I, "that very old man he's making for the poor's-house." And with that I let down my blind on him.

Next morning was as bright a one as you could wish to begin a year with, said the Widow Kidd. I had my window open again to see what

the birds had made of my crumbs, and lo and behold there were none of them left, and two blackbirds perched on the knobs of my railings, having knocked off the knobs of snow. With the sun just over the hill, Craig's ten-acre field was that dazzling it made me blink.

And the first thing I noticed was that there wasn't a single sign of a human foot-print on it, not from this end to the other. You never laid a new tablecloth that was more spotless in all your life. "Ring out the old!" says I.

The second thing I noticed was one of Craig's cart's with Craig's man Jimmie on it, just showing up. The sky wasn't blue, it was a kind of gold, and the cart up there seemed to be coming out of that blazing sky like the chariots of old full of angels.

"Jimmie my man," thinks I, "that's no road for a horse and cart this day." Though if he could find his way up it every Saturday night in the year, as he dad, he might well be able to find his way down it of a New Year's morning, snow or no snow.

He had Craig's boy with him, too, and what's more, Craig's dog. And do you think these two were on the cart or even on the road? Not them. They came running down in advance of the horse and cart, if you please, right down the middle of that white field, and up to all the pranks you can think of with that snow. The dog kept tossing it up with his muzzle and the boy kept kicking it up with his feet. And the boy kept thrpwing snowballs at the dog, which wasn't fair of him, for the poor beast, to be sure, couldn't throw any back at him. And soon enough there were the boy's footprints, and even the dog's four to his two, all over the place where the old man's had walked alone in the fear of the Lord.

"You're a pair, you are," thinks I, as shameless a boy and as shameless a dog as ever broke into a Sabbath peace like this when their betters have gone their ways and left no traces of themselves."

It was just then when they were within a shout of me, and when the lad was gathering up the snow again, that I saw Craig's boy stand stock-still looking at something in his hands.

That dog, believe me, was prancing around him and barking like mad, as dogs do when they think you're going to throw a stone or a stick for them. How my wits were working that day beats me still; but I had my third notion in twenty-four hours. I put my head out of the window and I called out at the top of my angry voice: "That whistle doesn't belong to you, you young ruffian!"

And the whistle it was, as sure as they christened me Susan. He was a very old man and he must for once have popped it into that wrong pocket that he said had no bottom to it. Now there was that chit of a boy, paying no heed to me, blowing the snow out of its stops until all of a sudden the whistle began to pipe up of its own accord you might say. Seemingly he was not new to it but he was not good at it. I'm not for music myself much, but let it be good music, says I, if it must be. "There's nae luck about the hoose," if you please; that's what he was trying to get out of the thing. That's the easiest tune to play and they all begin with it. I daresay the laddie meant no harm. But though, thinks I, as likely as not they'd never have

allowed the old man to play it in the poor's-house, still it upset me that that very old man had lost that very same whistle and that just Craig's boy had found it. Reason or not, that's what cost me my temper for a minute.

So when he came into the road, and the dog was still barking, I shouts at him: "Don't you dare come into my garden with your noise."

"Who's coming into your garden?" says he.

"Your noise is," says I.

"Then shut your window," says that boy, as bold as brass.

So I cries: "When you come to me this day you'll get your New Year's penny and fine you know it. But only when you come civil," I says. "Not a minute sooner and this time not a penny more."

With these same words, concluded Mrs. Kidd, I banged down my window; hard and angry, so that the snow fell off the frame and the poor blackies, that had nothing to do with it, went chittering up amongst the wintry trees.

...

The Crime Of Pessimism

by

George Bálint

(from the Hungarian)

It was evening. In the door, the key shrieked aloud, and he remained alone in the cell of blissfulness.

He had no last wish, and he had also refused the offices of the Prison Clown who had come into the shadows of his cell some hours before the execution in order to whisper in his ear a few consoling jokes. Thus was he left in solitude.

On the table lay some copies of "Le Scurire" and "La Vie Parisienne," yet to these he gave no glance. He observed the iron bars before which, outside, the silhouettes of the tired-leaved branches moved in the evening wind.

*

The whole thing had so happened: at home in his room he had cried; when he stepped into the street, his eyes were still red, weeping. The detective, who was lurking there and who, as was later brought out, already for weeks had watched him, stepped up, took him in hand and marched him to the police. He was given a short hearing and then, on the ground of suspicion of the crime of pessimism he was arrested and led into prison.

*

At the High Court trial the public appeared in great numbers. The members of the court wore foolscaps with little bells; the State Prosecutor had put on a comic mask with a long red nose. The Judge, before everyone, read the complaint which duly set forth that the accused had violated Pragraph 897 of the Civil Law Against Pessimism, because already for months he had no longer laughed and, furthermore, he had been caught sitting around lonely, with a sad face and hanging head, and in the latter

days even went with weeping eyes into the public thoroughfares; whereby had he violated, in addition, the provision against incitement to sadness and agitation against the social peace and harmony. Besides, there was found in his room at the search of domicile a volume of Schopenhauer, which was added to the proceedings as the corpus delicti. It was not yet proved that he had read in the book, since the volume was engaged in supporting one extremely short bed-leg, nevertheless it might with reason be understood that the accused had repeatedly turned the leaves, since the pages were somewhat dirty and crumpled.

*

To the question of the Judge, if he felt himself guilty, he answered, No. The Schopenhauer book he had not read, only used it to prop up the bed-leg, but, regardless of this, he had indeed often been in bad humor and sad, yet without any criminal and revolutionary intention, but only and exclusively because he had no reason to be merry . . .

"You have not read Leibnitz, and also not his 99th Law, which pronounces that this world is the best of all worlds and the best of all worlds imaginable?" asked the Judge, and tinkled his belled-cap loudly. In the public's seats, many laughed at this question, but the accused remained stubbornly grave, which made a very bad impression.

"I have," he answered, "but I had just at that time terrible headaches. Besides, I was very hungry, since I used to be, I must confess, often, in the second half of the month, very hungry. And on that same day I saw--I beg your grace, that my girl did not come any more to our rendezvous, instead of which I saw her accidentally half an hour later with an old, well known grain dealer in his equally well known limousine. . . In short, praiseworthy court, there were such small contributing circumstances coming in between that when I read the referred to work of Leibnitz. . . "

"Enough," broke in the Judge, his foolscap tinkling. "That is again only an indication of your socially hostile egocentric

world view. Why do you bring up your private affairs? Certain immoral women stories and other trifles excuse in no way your crime. Do you think you are alone in the world?"

The accused tried continuously, with the sad face and the dark voice of the secret sinner, to defend himself.

"But, I beg of you. . . what is there then in the world? . . . Wars, murders, terrible injustices, day by day, hungry masses, an epileptic beggar on the boulevards and children born with venereal diseases. . . starving factory workers and petty farmers, starving writers and starving readers, shameless untalented and millionaire charlatans, Olympiads of stupidity, world championships of hypocrisy and ocean flights of evil. . . prostituted women and prostituted men, prostituted bishops and prostituted film stars. . . and tuberculosis, Big Business, darkness, crying social questions. ."

The Judge interrupted once again.

"Enough!" . . . Confine yourself to answering my questions."

The Judge sought to determine then if

he had any accomplices, or had received gold from Moscow to spread a conspiracy. But the accused denied all this determinedly.

*

The summary of the Prosecuting Attorney was short, but of such convincing humor that the entire courtroom roared with laughter. Attorney for the defence, there was none, and the accused made no use of the right to have the last word.

The court retired. It appeared again. The Judge read the verdict. The court declared the accused guilty of the crime of repeated grave pessimism, and condemned him, in the sense of the respective paragraph, to death by hanging. The judgment of the court detailed at length how gravely and wickedly the accused had agitated against the existing world order, in that he had repeatedly ignorred his laugh duty and was in all probability---although for this unhappily there was no certain proof--- in the service of Bolshevik propaganda, and also had mourned before the public and appeared in the street with weeping eyes. As an aggravating circumstance,

it was to be taken into consideration that the accused during the whole proceedings had conducted himself with unusual cynicism, not once before the divine humor of the Prosecuting Attorney being moved to a repentant smile, indeed, during the summing up of the charges having even once again insolently broken out weeping.

The promulgation of the verdict created a tremendous effect. Many of the women present laughed themselves sick.

*

On the other side of the window bars, in the cell of blissfulness, the dirty gray of morning began to break. The cell was opened. In the corridor stood the hangman, masked as Buster Keaton, the Prosecuting Attorney, the Prison Clown and the Warden. The procession set forth.

In the courtyard stood the gallows. A grammophone began to play a soft Charleston, and the Officiating Judge read the verdict dancing. . .

Then spoke the Prosecuting Attorney:

"Hangman, do your duty!"

Two minutes later the delinquent was dangling on the gallows. His blue face was pulled its full width in a mighty grin, and in his unbounded good humor he stuck out his tongue. And his stiff corpse swung on the rope, dancing to the beat of the music.

-.-

--translated by whit
burnett

One With Shakespeare

by

Martha Foley

Yes, Miss Cox was there, sitting at her desk in the almost empty classroom. Elizabeth took in the theme she had written to make up for a class missed because of illness.

A description of people under changing circumstances was the assignment.

Elizabeth had chosen immigrants arriving at a Boston dock. She had got quite excited as she wrote about the black-eyed women and their red and blue dresses, the swarthy men and their earrings and the brightness of a faraway Mediterranean land slipping off a rocking boat to be lost in the grayness of Boston streets.

Elizabeth had liked writing this theme better than anything she had done since the description of a sunset. Amethyst and rose with a silver ribbon of river. Elizabeth

shivered. A silver ribbon - that was lovely. And so was scarlet kerchief in the night of her hair in this theme. Words were so beautiful.

Miss Cox read the new theme, a red pencil poised in her authoritative fingers. Miss Cox was so strong. She was strongest of all the teachers in the school. Stronger even than the two men teachers, Mr. Carpenter of physics and Mr. Cattell of math. A beautiful strongness. Thought of Miss Cox made Elizabeth feel as she did when two bright shiny words suddenly sprang together to make a beautiful a perfect phrase.

Elizabeth was glad she had Miss Cox as an English teacher and not Miss Foster any more. Miss Foster had made the class last year count the number of times certain words occurred in Poor Richard's Almanac to be sure they read the book right through word for word. And the words were all so ugly. Like picture of Benjamin Franklin. But Miss Cox made you feel the words. As when she read from the Tale of Two Cities in her deep singing voice, this is a better thing than I have ever done. Poor

Sydney Carton.

Miss Cox had finished the second page of the theme. She was looking up at Elizabeth, her small dark blue eyes lighting up her glasses.

"Let me give you a pointer, my dear."

Elizabeth automatically looked toward the blackboard ledge at the chalky pointer until the words my dear bit into her mind. My dear! Miss Cox had called her my dear.

"You have a spark of the divine fire," Miss Cox said. "You should make writing your vocation."

Elizabeth flamed. Miss Cox, my dear, themes about immigrants, blackboards and desks whirled and fused in the divine fire.

Miss Cox marked A in the red pencil at the top of the theme and Elizabeth said thank you and went away.

Elizabeth went back to her desk in the III A classroom which was in charge of Miss Perry. Miss Perry was her Greek teacher as well as her room teacher. Somehow Miss Perry made Elizabeth hate Greek. Elizabeth liked to think of Greece. White and gold in a blue Aegean. I,Sappho. Wailing Trojan women.

Aristotle and Plato and Socrates. Grace and brains said her father of the men. But that was outside of Greek class. To Miss Perry Greece was the aorist of tithemi and Xenophon's march in the Anabasis. Elizabeth always said to herself as she came into the III A room I hate Miss Perry, the aorist and Xenophon. Oh, how I hate them.

But this morning Elizabeth only pitied Miss Perry. She had no spark of the divine fire, poor thing.

Greek was the first class this morning. Elizabeth didn't care. She should make writing her vocation. That was something Miss Perry could never do. If she were called on for the list of irregular verbs this morning she would like to tell Miss Perry that. It would explain why she hadn't studied her Greek homelesson. Why should she be bothered with conjugations when she had to describe blue and red men arriving on an alien shore ?

"Npw, Miss Morris, will you please give me the principal parts of the verb to give."

That was dithemi. But what was the

perfect tense? Divine fire, divine fire.

"If you don't know, you may sit down. But I warn you that unless you do your homelessons better you are not going to pass this month."

Divine fire, divine fire.

The second hour was study class. Under Miss Pratt with the ugly bulb of a nose, splotchy face and eternal smile. Miss Pratt taught something or another to the younger girls down in the sixth class. She always smiled at Elizabeth but Elizabeth seldom smiled back. Her smile never means anything thought Elizabeth.

Elizabeth dumped her books down on her desk in Miss Pratt's room. She opened Vergil to the part she liked. Where Aeneas told Dido the story of his wandering while the stars waned and drooped in the sky. It was not her lesson. She had had that months ago. But she liked going back over it just as she liked the beginning of the first book. Great bearded Aeneas rang out in arma virumque cano. That was strong. She would write strong some day. Strong like Vergil and fine like Swinburne. I will go back to the great sweet mother, mother and lover of men, the sea.

Swinburne had divine fire. Keats. Shelley, hail to thee, blithe spirit. And Masefield whose autograph she had bought for five shillings, not to help the British but to have a bit of the man who wrote the Widow in Bye Street.

Elizabeth looked out into the school courtyard. Fine green shoots. Yellow on the laburnum. Spring was here. Divine fire, divine fire.

"Miss Morris, haven't you any work to do?"

Miss Pratt smiling. Nasty, nasty smiling. Didn't know whom she was talking to like that? A great writer. A girl who would be famous. Let her ask Miss Cox. Why I have a spark of the divine fire. I am one with Shakespeare and Keats, Thackeray and Bronte and all the other great writers.

Elizabeth plumped her head in her hands and stared at the Latin page. Opposite was an illustration of an old statue, supposed to be Dido. Further on was a pen and ink sketch of Dido mounting the funeral pyre. Further on was a sketch of Aeneas nearing Rome. Further on was

the vocabulary. Then the end of the book. Elizabeth turned, page by page. She could not study and if she looked out the window at Spring again Miss Pratt would be nasty.

"Please, Miss Pratt, may I go to the library?"

"Must you go to the library? What for?"

"I have a reference in my history lesson to look up in the encyclopaedia."

"Very well."

The library was large and quiet. A whole floor above Miss Pratt and the study class. It was divided off into alcoves. History in one. Encyclopaedias in another. Languages, sciences. Fiction and poetry were in the farthest end which opened out toward the Fenway. The Fenway with its river and wide sky where Elizabeth liked to walk alone.

Elizabeth had read all the fiction and all the poetry. All of Janes Austen and the Sorrows of Werther and lots of other books which had nothing to do with her classes. She was always afraid one of her teachers would come in some day during study class and ask

her what she was reading that book for. But that had never happened. And the librarian never paid any attention to her.

Now she went into the fiction and poetry alcove and sat on a small shelf ladder. She looked out the window at the long line of poplars rimming the fens. What would she call them if she were writing about them ? Black sentinels against the sky. Oh beautiful, oh beautiful. That was the divine fire.

There was ancient history with Miss Tudor who had had the smallpox and it showed all over her face, and geometry with Mr. Cattell who had a gray beard and gray eyes and gray clothes and gray manner. Elizabeth liked that, gray manner. That was what the Advanced English Composition called penetrating analysis of character. She would do lots of penetrating analysis when she wrote in earnest.

She would write novels, the greatest, most moving novels ever written, like Jean Christophe, Elizabeth was deciding when the bell rang for the end of the history lesson. And in between the novels she would write fine medallions of short stories like Tchekov's,

Elizabeth told herself when the bell rang for the end of the geometry lesson. And she would always write lovely poems in between the novels and the short stories, she was thinking when the bell rang for the end of the school day.

Elizabeth walked past Miss Cox's room on her way out of the building. She slowed down her steps as she came to the door. Miss Cox was putting away her things in the drawer of her desk. Elizabeth would dedicate her first book to Miss Cox. To Miss Eleanor G. Cox this book is gratefully dedicated by the author.

Eileen and Ruth were waiting for Elizabeth at the entrance. Eileen was the cousin of a famous poet and her mother was an anarchist. Elizabeth liked the thought of anyone being an anarchist. It sounded so much more beautiful than being a Democrat or a Republican. And Ruth, who was a class ahead, had already had her poems printed in the Transcript. Four times. And one of the poems had been reprinted by William Stanley Braithwaite in his anthology. Oh, they were going to be great and famous, all three.

"Let's walk home and save our fares for fudge sundaes," said Eileen.

"All right, only I am going to have pineapple," said Ruth.

"I'll go with you but I won't have any sundae," Elizabeth said. "I'm going to save my fares this week to buy Miss Cox flowers."

"You have a crush on Miss Cox."

"Perhaps I have and perhaps I haven't. Anyway she said something wonderful to me this morning.

"She said I had a spark of the divine fire and should make writing my vocation."

"Oh, that is wonderful. She never told me that, not even after Mr. Braithwaite took one of my poems for his anthology."

"This is the happiest day of my life. Even when I have written many books and proved Miss Cox's faith in me, I shall always look back to this day. I never expected to be so wonderfully happy."

The three girls, arm in arm, walked through the Fenway.

"I tell you, let's not get sundaes. Since Elizabeth's saving her money, it isn't

fair to go in and eat them right before her. Let's you, Ruth, and I buy some of those big frosted doughnuts and some bananas and eat them on the Charles River esplanade. Then Elizabeth can have some too.

"All right, and we can watch the sun set."

"Oh, but that's what isn't fair. Is to save my money and then eat up what you buy."

"Next time you can give us something."

Elizabeth loved the Charles river. It always hurt her to think that it was on a Charles river bridge that Longfellow should have made up I stood on the bridge at midnight. Perhaps that wasn't so bad but so many parodies of the poem had ridiculed the river. Once Elizabeth had written a "Letter to a River." Elizabeth pretended she was away off somewhere, like in New York, and was writing to the river to tell how much she missed its beauty. She had put so many lovely phrases in it, she thought, and she couldn't understand why the editor of the Atlantic Monthly had sent it back to her. But great writers always had many rejections first. That Scottish writer in whose eyes Ruth said she saw his soul, had said

in his lecture that to write greatly, one must first suffer greatly.

How she had suffered, thought Elizabeth. Her math and Greek teachers were so cruel to her. She who had a spark of divine fire to be treated as they treated her. Tears came to her eyes. And now, when she was tired, she was walking home instead of riding so she could buy Miss Cox flowers. Pink sweetheart roses. Little tight knots of flowers. That was suffering and sacrifice. But it was for love as well as for literature.

"I felt the rhythm of the universe last night," Ruth was saying. "I was sitting on the roof in the dark and I felt the night all around me."

"That makes me think of swiftly walk over the western wave, spirit of night. But it always bothers me that the wave is to the east in Boston," said Eileen. "Otherwise I like that poem very much."

"The rhythm of the universe? What do you mean?"

"Oh, you know. The way someone said the stars swing round in their courses. And

that's why I never, never want to study astronomy. I want only to imagine the stars. That's so much more beautiful than any facts about them can ever be."

"I don't agree with you at all. Why when you think that the light of the nearest star started coming to you three years ago and what you were doing then and how this minute some star is starting to send you light, that may not get to you until far away and old and."

"Stop! Don't give me facts about the stars! You can have those facts about your stars, if you want. But leave me my stars to love as I please."

"Oh, very well. There, now the sky is coloring. See that lovely clear green high up. Pretty soon the deep colors will come. My, these frosted doughnuts are good. Much better than any near where we live."

"There's the first light on the other bank. Over near the Tech building."

That was what it was to have a spark of divine fire, Elizabeth's thoughts flowed on with the darkening river. She could put

all this, the river and the sky colors and the lights into writing. People would feel the loveliness of the world as they had never felt it before. People would no longer walk with their heads bent to the street when there was a sunset to be seen. What have you done to her, masters of men, that her head should be bowed down thus, thus in the deepening twilight and golden angelus. Her father said Noyes wrote maudlin singsong. It was jingly sometimes but she did like it. And too many heads were bowed down, you masters of men.

"Mother'll scold me if I stay any later," said Eileen.

"And my mother said she wouldn't get me a new dress for the class party if I came home late again."

"Yes, we must all be going. But isn't it nice to think when you wake up at home in bed at night that the river is out here, creeping on and on under the stars ?"

"No wonder Miss Cox said you had divine fire. Let's put our banana peels in here. This is Spring Clean Up Week, you know."

"Good night."

"Good Night."

"Good night."

Holding the thought of her own greatness close to her, Elizabeth went home. A sliver of moon curled in the sky. That is the moon Shelley, Shakespeare, Spencer and yes, way back, Chaucer looked at. And now I am looking at it.

"Mother, Miss Cox says I have a spark of divine fire. I am to be a great writer some day."

"Isn't that nice ? Did you remember not to wipe your pen point on your petticoat today?"

"Oh, mother, you know that's not a question of remembering. I never do it when I'm thinking about it. But you didn't half listen to what Miss Cox said about me."

"Indeed I did. She said you had a divine spark of fire. That means you'll get another A in English this month on your report card."

"It means more than any old report card. It means my whole life. I'm to be a writer, a great writer."

"But first you must finish school and

college. And that means you have to do your mathematics better. Remember how angry your father was about that E in geometry last month."

Elizabeth sighed. She went out on the back porch which looked across the city. Lights pricked the blackness. Like a necklace which had spilled over velvet. Oh, words were lovely.

The moon was still there, a more emphatic sliver now. Moon of Shelley and Keats and Shakespeare and my moon said Elizabeth and went into dinner.

...

The Great Wheel

by

Ernst Decsey

..

Bitterau is a village lying with averted face in the low country. And only those go there that have to.

The solitary inn has nothing but cider and schnaps. You get a bed with some peasant or other. I took a room at the Greuthofers', where the mattress was stuffed with corn husks and where at night the pigs kept shifting about and grunting.

Privacy there was none, you all mucked in together; you housed with the young and old, rooster and mouse, hearth and smoke, life and death.

What brought me here? My predecessor in that room, meeting me in Vienna had set my heart on Bitterau. First-rate, he said, cheap, ideal, an unspoilt place for a summer holiday.

My predecessor was a pathological liar. The medicinal spring he had discovered in the picturesque woods consisted of Greuthofer's old domestic well. And when I filled the long, coffin-shaped wash trough at it to have my bath, the surprised children laughed. And so did the hens.

But I was in for it. I was for richer in despair than in ready money. For the same price, I might have gone to St. Moritz. And here I was condemned to bannocks, sour milk, juniper gin, in a land lamentably without landscape.

My books were quickly exhausted. The fattest book becomes thin, the most instructive empty, a second, forced reading. By the guttering paraffin lamp the summer evenings stretched out, as if from sheer malice, into sleepless immensities, and smoking innumerable nightly cigarettes that made little beacons in my solitude, I thought of Pontius Mueller, the idler, running around the civilized world somewhere in his trim new car.

Pontius Mueller made a sort of elaborate art of life. He had his dentist in Mannheim,

his appendicitis specialist in Rome, and he went the rounds of all the famous spas, an international patient in search of superfluous health.

City-born, full of himself, he feared death as an execrable interloper who walks unbidden into the house. Well versed in medicine but ignorant of biology, in November Pontius would become quite elegiac, speak of Nature's great requiem, then clear out, straight for the Riviera, full of hatred for the Autumn which, he said, was Death's recruiting season. Whereas, as everybody knows, Autumn is Death's dead season. The great dance of death begins in May, when the new shoots are coming forth from the earth.

And now he had dumped me here. I'd long have decamped, just as he did, but the fact was I was kept back by one person, a most singular, creature--Loisia.

Loisia was a little old woman of seventy-five. She was a pensioner of Greuthofer's. She may have been much older still. But she had long outlived all feminine vanity. When I asked her: "Mightn't you be eighty now, or even eighty-five?" she replied without concern: "Ay, ay, like enough!"

Loisia possessed a figure none of her sisters would have envied her. Her body was bent in two, from rheumatics perhaps, or it might have been from a life of stooping; at any rate the lower part was supported by two short stumps of legs while the torso projected at right angles. And yet in this God-ordained shape she was unremittingly active, and shuffled around daily in the pasture. She had never been out of Bitterau, yet she sized up time and things better than I, with all my books. She read in Herbs and weeds, in trunk and stalk, field and cloud, bark and tree, the ample symbols in which the world is written.

Greuthofer's cows, buzzing with flies and smelling of milk, were to me a throng of horned, brown-patched, satiny bodies. Loisia knew each particular one by face, form and temperament; she scolded the dun heifer that was inclined to stray, praised Dapple that was big with calf. With a certain tender greatness, like Homer's Eumaios, she was especially devoted to the pigs, the care of which she had taken over in return for her keep. To each of her protegees she spoke in an appropriate tone, exhorting them like children to mind

their manners, and she mixed their swill with all the solicitude of an apothecary.

Jean Paul, we know, used to call his dog "Man," but Loisia was incapable of such a slight. Those big barrel-shaped beasts that an ironic nature has rounded off with so brief a final curlicue seemed, to her, beings of a higher order, something mysterious and god-like one had to serve, and the prime porker, which never would eat enough for her, she called Prince.

"Prince has no appetite!"

She worried about the state of his health, for which she took herself to task. To my mind, Prince gorged himself like a cannibal. But in her profounder insight into the processes of nature Loisia nursed her deep anxiety. Prince was never out of her mind, Prince was the apple of her eye.

Loisia seemed set on reaching ninety. But one day something came over her. There was a shower, an icy wind came driving through the beech trees out of the land of the Vandals, a wind that goes to your marrow, and Loisia had to take to her bed. There she lay in her damp little attic, beside the peeling wall, no bigger than a child,

as if already in her coffin, alone with her fate, coughing, coughing her life out. Her lungs kept rattling the whole night long. Greuthofer brought her his trusty gin; I got up to make him fetch the doctor. He took a pull at his elixir and warded me off.

"Now, now," he said, "it won't be as bad as all that!"

The illness was only the start. On top of that came Stepischnegg, the cattle-dealer, with gold rings in his ears, a low black hat on his head, and in his hand, dangling, the cattleman's pizzle-switch. His knock at the door meant nothing to me, but Greuthofer scratched the back of his ear.

"When he shows up---the cattle-dealer--that's death for somebody," he said.

And the fact is, when she heard the flesher asking after Prince, whether he was sound and up to weight, Loisia made the sign of the cross.

From day to day Loisia got worse. And one day the peasant said to me: "Here have I been hard at it all my life and now this comes down on me!" He was inconsolable. Loisia's illness grieved him greatly, it cost him a worker. At length, however,

He seemed reconciled to the inevitable. He brought his wife to Loisia's bed.

"If ye die," he said, "ye give Mother here the black kerchief, don't ye? And the savings bank book is for me?"

Loisia nodded.

So everything was arranged, and the long wooden wash-trough that had served me as a bath tub was set up on end beside the door.

When Loisia's eyes were already glazing Greuthofer decided to send for the doctor. It was a dreadful night. The rain foamed wildly on the little bull's-eye windows, the rebellious darkness beat upon the roof. We waited. No doctor came. And who could expect the man to ride four, five miles for the sake of one old woman?

But the Capuchin friar did come. Father Anton, with his long beard. He found his way over on foot. The dear old body should not depart without the consolations of religion; Christian duty was afraid of no cloudburst. He went upstairs to her and administered the Sacrament. After Extreme Unction, Loisia closed her eyes for the last time.

"It's all up with her," said Greuthofer and asked us in for a dram. We sat down in his parlour. Sleep was not to be thought of. The peasant's wife brought an ashet of meat from the curing press. We set to and drank the brandy out of pint pots. Up above us lay the dead. "She was a good soul," said Greuthofer, "Here's to her." We drank her health.

It was dawn before I went to bed. The young day mounted guard like a bright herald. I fell into a profound sleep. I dreamt I saw the Great Wheel in the Prater Park, its high rim slowly turning in the sky, kept in motion by Capuchin monks, and all its crowded little cabins, rising, falling on the arc, were wash-troughs.

I woke late. The sun was at my window. I went outside. After that somber night, a whiff of fresh air was good. I wanted to have a word or two with the peasant.

The yard was deserted. They were all out working in the fields. I was of two minds: shall I go out to them there, or shall I go up and see the last of old Loisia, my last respects to the old woman's remains?

Still debating this, I came past the big

well, and there stood motionless, weak with amazement.

Loisia, the dead, was kneeling by the pig-sty feeding the pigs.

And, bent double as ever, she was talking to Prince, holding a plate beneath his snout:

"There now!"

Sensing my presence, she turned her head and I looked in her eyes, unable to find a word to greet her.

"But you are dead," I wanted to say. "You should be lying in the wash-trough. How do you get here?"

But I was frightened of my own voice.

At last a few words came. "What's all this then, Loisia? Have you got better again after all?"

Not a bit. She had not got better. She was dying and she knew it. But that was a long drawn out business and she had decided meantime to see what Prince was up to, Prince, as usual. When they had all gone out to the fields to stack their sheaves, who was there left to bother about Prince? She couldn't rest, she interrupted her death agony, laying it aside as if it were her

knitting, and went about her cherished chore.

Prince had an appetite today.

"Did you miss me now, eh?" she bent close to the animal.

The pig gobbled for joy.

Her satisfaction complete, Loisia went up again and got herself into bed.

Toward four o'clock in the afternoon I leaned over her face. It was like a crinkled little leather apple. Greuthofer held a goose feather to her lips. She had resumed her dying where she had left it off. There was no breath kortal more.

. . .

translated by

Oliver Gossman

(from the German.)

A POOR RELATION

by

Romer Wilson

..

Fragment from a Mss. entitled
The Education of Milvil Sykes. . .

..

--------My father died yesterday afternoon toward three o'clock. I see by my diary that yesterday was Saturday. I have not yet been to bed. I had a curious feeling that he had died upon the wrong day. Members of our family usually make important appointments for the middle of the week. It is curious that I cannot believe he died without previously making an appointment. The birds were singing in the elm outside his bedroom window, outside the drawn shades the birds were singing in the sun. Charles stood over by the window. His profile showed very clean against the ochre square

of the shade. He had arrived but an hour before from Washington. I had been called too by telegram. We were all there, Charles, Henry, Mary, myself, and Thomas, all of us were there in the room where we had been born. The others watched my father die. I watched them watching him. They knew the power was passing from him to them, the power and the money, how much of the latter had been willed to me none of them was certain. How much of the former might escape to me none of them was certain. At that moment I was the only Sykes of importance. I knew my own importance and in a measure regretted it. It made me feel lonely, very lonely, very powerful, able to injure cruelly those whose name I share. I knew then that my strength was only this--that I cannot care wholeheartedly for all that we have meant to one another, for the philosophy of seven generations bred bare of error that each of us is able to hand to his children, that our children expect by right from us after so long.

I am, I think, our poor relation. When our father's will is read I shall find myself with only four million dollars and unfortunately I shall not grudge Charles a cent of his major

share. Charles has Washington unavoidably on his back. My Irish wife and I will live in Europe. I know I am our poor relation, I am regarded in the same light as Uncle Harry who was shot at on the steps of the Opera House in Petersburg. The Whistlers were there at that time, both mere children, but even after James made a name for himself my people did not buy his pictures. His father gossiped about Uncle Harry's disgrace and moreover there was the West Point affair.

The birds singing peacefully outside the death chamber brought tenderness to that solemn scene. It was a scene. Neither my father nor I staged it. We listened to the birds. Mary knew her part. Charles was himself. Henry and Thomas were with Charles. My father understood me. Neither of us understood Charles. That was not possible. He is very pure, and at my father's death he stood upright in beautiful strength.

After father had gone, they sat in the library together and said very little. We all met at dinner. They ate very little and drank sparingly. Charles sat up all night waiting.

None of the others lay late. I have spent the whole of the last twenty four hours in the garden. A strange happiness has come close to me, a peaceful happiness. I seem to be near Kate, near my wife and near my father. Father and Kate hardly met, but they were both kind and chivalrous. They knew how to spare pain. She dared kiss him once. He had a sense of justice that I trust. He will not leave me more than four million. Less would not be fair to the children who are both Sykes. Their mother did not stand against the blood. I am glad of it. I am very glad Kate did them no injury. There are twelve generations against her. She has had no chance. None of us was able to give her a chance, neither my father nor I, Therefore I took her to Europe, and in Paris her beauty is understood and her wit admired. Mary and she were unable to understand that each other is a woman. Mary's power and Mary's intellect are uncomprehended by her. She will cry when she hears the old man is dead. I am afraid our increased wealth will shock her. It will be difficult to tell her of it. Kate is elusive sometimes, even now. I shall rejoin her

in Paris, free---curiously free---no longer my father's son, I have a strange desire to laugh. No longer my father's fourth child, but entirely a regretted family incident, because I share the name and blood of those who henceforth are free to treat me pityingly, sarcastically, semi-tolerantly as a poor relation-----

...

a day in the country

by

whit burnett

How the Seine sinks slowly from the banks, leaving a gangrene spewed across the wrinkles of its stones, and the air lies lifeless over all of Paris in a hot summer mist, sultriness suffusing every living thing---Paris knows such strange white days. Stillness in the air, and the rank odor of ripe stored things, bursting for release. The mad whinny of the horses, stallions, hot-blooded, stamping through the litter in the market streets, or standing, now, at times, listless, unchewing, with their long heads sunk tiredly in their musty feed bags. . . . And from a squalid court in Belleville, the scream of some old woman, insane perhaps and bed-pent, sensing and foretelling the summer thunder yet to come. . .

We sought the open air. The direct sun. Country.

Past Noisy-le-Sec the heat mist lingered. The summer storm the night before had hardly changed the atmosphere. The sky was white and wide, and the train lurched through a stickiness. And then, at Enghien-les-Bains, over the trees across the lake, a spot of blue welled out. With it came the sun.

At l'Isle Adama we stepped from the train into a sweet contentment. Just a couple of hours, or less, outside of Paris, and the vague greyness of the city, its old buildings rearing darkly close together in smelly dampness, its shrieking traffic, and the summer fetidity of millions in decay --- only a memory in the brightness and the freshness of the country day.

"One day off," said my young friend, lifting her face to the high blue sky, "and we pick such a beauty."

"Yes," I agreed, "we have luck."

She smiled, content. We are young ... ... after all. She swung the small blue bag, freely, like a schoolgirl. We travel light, always, since we have lived together. It is a rule, a feeling in us both perhaps that life

should be a freer thing, unpulled down with baggage and dead things.

The Frenchmen, with their home-keeping wives and children, were walking on ahead of us. The fine sun, beating on their black clothes, slowed down their steps. They ambled slowly on, with their hands on their children's shoulders, or linked with their wives, or burdened, some, with baskets and bundles they'd brought from town.

We trailed along behind them.

There was no hurry. There is no hurry when the sun shines, brightly and freshly, and the good ground, dry and firm, makes each step natural, friendly, responsive to the union with the earth.

At the bridge we stopped and looked down into the stream.

The water was slow moving and contentful. A distant point of the island, heavy with tremendous trees, jutting down into the stream, divided the Oise in two. Beyond the point was the main part of the river. A tug was lazily puffing up the current, towing a barge of sand.

"It is an effort to get out of Paris,"

said my friend. "A person stagnates. But the effort is worth it. We might be sitting there forever on some terrace, just sitting. . . that damp, heavy heat. . ."

Just sitting. . .

We stood for a long time on the bridge. We leaned across the old stone parapet. The river without a ripple on its surface dreamed into an absence. Nothing. Only the fresh sun. Green. Tired eyes halted in their dance after movements. Arrested on a glitter in the stream.

The tugboat coughed a hoarse staccatto. And we awoke into existence. We straightened up and walked across the bridge.

* * *

The little town's main street, cobble-stoned and clean, stretched onward into trees and sky. The street, at noon, was basking in a sunny idleness. Hardly anyone was out. Shops, in the French lunch-hour fashion, were shut, and here and there, from the sidewalk, we smelled the good smell of freshly cooking food.

At a small cafe, whose sign said it had a garden in the rear, we stopped for an apéritif. It was time to eat. The rain the

night before, heavier in l'Isle Adam than it had been in Paris, had battered the young trees in the garden. Leaves were lying rain-soaked on the tables. A pair of forlorn rabbits watched us from a coop. We were alone in the garden.

"This is not very cheerful," said my friend. "Let's go back to that nice château by the bridge. They must serve meals. I think I saw a sign."

At the bridge we stopped again, naively drawn by the water. Water it was, country-clean - - a river more like a river than the Seine, along whose dusty quais the Paris jobless lay stretched in the summer dirt, and under whose old bridges at night the city's winter-weary, dressed in remnants of clothes and patches of rages, seek a cold night's rest. Green things grew along the banks of the Oise, and here and there one could see, near the edges, even the rocks in the river bed.

The château was really a hotel, but only a miniature sign announced it. It was a gloomy looking building, tall and ancient. But the grounds were lush and quiet, deeply shaded by great trees higher than the house.

Two waiters in their white coats hovered around the tables.

From the garden the view gave expansively out across the stream, taking in, even, the sight of the little bathing beach across the shore, where an enterprising firm had erected a pavilion and cabins newly painted white and green. A radio at this new place, now and then on loud notes, scratched out raucousness.

Both waiters watched us, as we hesitated where to sit. Then they both moved toward us.

One was young, not much younger than myself, I thought, and tall, too. The other was middle-aged and, like most Frenchmen nowadays, short and small.

The tall youth, who seemed unusually pale, stood by silently. He recommended, when pressed for advice, the table d'hôte. He was smooth-shaven, serious, and reserved. He spoke a little English, and his French sounded foreign. We took him for a Swede.

The short waiter sauntered over, finally, to see if he could help out. He was a dark-skinned fellow whose quiet brown eyes indicated he had reached a certain age of pleasantness in

casual dealings, of acceptance and philosophy. We took his suggestion, which was made in a leisurely, off-hand way, and started with fish.

"Tres bon," he offered, as dipped the white meat in the sauce, "n'est-ce pas? Ce poisson là?"

"Caught around here?" I asked.

"Ah, non," the short man said, "we don't catch fish like that around here."

The wine glowed in our veins.

"In a strange place," said my companion, as we began later on the steak, "it is best, in the long run, just to go to the best place they have. In some small place you might get typhus . . . or something."

"We will get plenty of typhus then in Russia," I said. "We won't find many best places in Russia."

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "They are not so uncivilized. We will get a change. There will be tension there, too. Vitality."

"When we go through Germany we must sample the beer."

"Ask the tall waiter," she suggested, "about Germany. He looks blond and German."

When the young man came with the salad, I told him we were planning a vacation. "Are you, perhaps, German?" I asked.

He did not lift his head. But his answer was curt and quick, almost sullen.

"Je suis russe," he said. "Vrai russe."

The accent on the "true Russian" chilled us through the course.

Around us, the deserted tables stood like white houses abandoned. It was Monday. We were the only patrons. The older waiter, his folded napkin on his sleeve, strolled by again to see how things were going.

"Beau temps, aujourd'hui, hein?"

"Not so good last night, though," he went on. "Big wind. Lightning. Thunder. You saw the tree as you came in the driveway? The biggest tree on the island struck last night by lightning."

We hadn't noticed it. We had come in on the outgoing circle of the drive. The tree, it seemed, was on the other curve.

The young man, standing quietly by, poured water in the glasses.

"Odd luck, too," he said, suddenly, with

his special accent. "Fell between two great limousines. One was a Rolls-Royce," he added, I thought, with pride.

My friend looked at me.

"If Rolls-Royces come in here," she said, "our bill will probably be a pretty one."

It was raining so hard that motoring was impossible, the older man said. They told the story together. How the people had just got out of their cars and were on their way up the hotel steps, and then the loud crash came. They became quite animated in telling about the fall of the tree in the storm. The loud crash. And no one hurt. Not a soul. The biggest tree on the island. And not a single scratch on the cars.

"Miraculeuse!" we said.

"The Americans are going to Germany --- pour les vacances," the young waiter said to his colleague. "Vous parlez l'allemand, n'est-ce pas?"

He withdrew to the kitchen.

"Nur ein wenig," the short one smiled at us.

"I learned a few words in the war," he added.

Four years in the war, he said. Four

years at the front.

"No," he answered, "I was hardly scratched. Just a little bullet wound here, in the fat of the hand." He held out his palm. Intimate, stranger's flesh. A bullet, lead, ripping redly through. "Never bothers, except sometimes just before a storm. Il gratte," he made a scratching gesture with his fingers. "Then it itches like the devil."

"My colleague here," the Frenchman continued, "he got a bullet in his knee. He still limps a little, see?"

The pale young man was coming toward us with the fruit. His left leg was bent a little inward and the drag was just perceptible.

"He wasn't in the war, though, was he?"

"Non," the youth put in. "Not in France. I was in the civil war --- Russia. Later. That's the worst. Civil war. Brother against brother. That's the worst war."

How old then?

"Sixteen," he said.

We saw. On a horse, as a youth, young, and the head full of books, perhaps, or girls, and the beginnings of life and love. And a

sword in the hand. Crowds out. Crowds around the food stores. Orders of the day. Sabers out. Riding. Charging. Knocking down people. Guns from barricades. Bullets . . .

The youth seemed paler as we looked at him. His blue eyes were troubled, hurt perhaps, I thought, puzzled in his youth and his lostness in the world. There was no fire in his voice. No ring of heroism.

"I got the rifle ball in my kneecap still," he said. "It is too hard to operate. They say better if it stay there."

"Doesn't it bother you?" asked my friend.

"Only sometimes," said the waiter.

"That depends," said the older waiter, informatively," on the weather. Like me. Ça gratte un peu, eh, quand le temps change?" He looked toward the youth.

The younger waiter was preoccupied. He cleared the table in silence.

"Alors," said the older man, "Ça, c'est la guerre. They will have a hard time getting me into another war."

"Eh, so you think?" asked the youth. They had evidently talked of this before. They

seemed to forget us.

"Oui," said the waiter.

The youth piled plate on plate.

"Les jeunes," said the older man to us, and smiled in his age, "les jeunes sont toujours patriotiques."

The waiters watched us as we left the grounds. They nodded pleasantly, the long one with the saddened eyes, and the short Frenchman, as we looked back from the edge of the grounds. We were searching for the fallen tree. The older waiter, still smiling, pointed energetically on a little further. We signalled our thanks.

We found the tree, stretched, in appalling death, a cross the roadway, its tremendous black trunk ripped with a wounded whiteness from the lightning.

. . . As we got into the tiny canoe and attempted to relax without tipping it over, the sun came down upon us strong. We drifted down stream into the deep main part of the river, until an empty tug, fast clipping the peaceful water, rolled off waves in our direction, and bounced us like a cork.

We pushed back frantically for the bend

in the river. We are neither very good swimmers. The sun's glare made me a little giddy.

* * *

"There's a woman fishing."

Around the bend, the river was placid as velvet. The greenery was deep and rich, like the foliage in the mystical paintings of the Customs Agent, Rousseau.

"Got a bite, too," I noticed.

We watched her fish, her eyes glued brightly on the float, and her wide straw hat turned back above her forehead. A jerk, and out came a minnow, four inches long. And then, in a few minutes, another little silver fish, flittering in the air, which she dropped into a pail in her boat.

She had rigged herself up comfortably, seated somewhat fatly in a cushioned wicker chair in a wide rowboat. She was middle-aged, sunburned and dressed in a blue housewrap. The rowboat was tied to the bank at the drop of a few steps leading to a walk which went through a garden to a house with summer balconies.

"Bon Jour," she said, friendlily noticing our interest.

"Biting well?" I asked.

"Vous l'avez dit, monsieur !"

"What kind of bait do you use?"

She held up the hook she was baiting. The little white maggot worm wiggled in a tiny arc in the air.

"Américains, n'est-ce pas?"

"Oui."

"There's an extra pole in the boat. Tie up if you wish and try it."

"Merci beaucoup."

We laid back the paddles and sat at rest in the green deepness of the shade. Across the stream, the radio had begun again its modern wheezing, but on our side it was so still a ripple glancing at the skiff could easily be heard.

My trouble was in baiting. I had no luck. The woman, beaming under her straw hat, and turning her sunburned face now and then toward me quizzically, puzzled her brows. Why didn't I pullin, helping her fill her pail?

"No wonder," she said, finally, "when you bait like that."

She threaded a squirming white worm through the back of the neck. The point of the hook came out the other end, and there he hung,

impaled skin deep, and wiggling for his life as he hit the dark water.

The afternoon droned on. The sleepiness of quiet rested on us like a spell. A huge plane soared suddenly overhead, power-purring its way to the south. It passed into silence. On the bend of the river we were buried in the shadows of the trees, far from any sense or feeling of war, of trenches, strain, bombs and mud and wounds. And, if one has never been in war . . . any war . . . world war. Burgerkrieg. Civil War. Like that young Russian . . .

"We did just as well not telling the Russian boy we were going to make a trip into Russia," said my friend.

"Yes," said I.

. . . And the Austrian I had met who had served on the front against the Italians . . . One got different ideas of the war from the other side of the picture, traveling, for instance among the post-war Austrians, so like mild children, they were, who had lived too long, perhaps, under the wing of an emperor-father.

"I don't think I ever shot anybody. It wasn't any good, that war. I sort of shot over

their heads."

He was a Socialist. Every day, even ten years afterward when I saw him in his little house in Upper Austria, he had a kind of sickness in the morning.

"We could see it coming," he told me. "A dirty, greenish, yellow trail hugging the ground I didn't get the mask out quick enough. And I sniffed a little of that gas."

He excused himself and vomited. . .

The fisherwoman had her pail full of fish.

She was interested in us being Americans, and had reason for her interest, as she proved. She rose, heavy in her loose blue dress, stretched and gathered up the pail and pole. Would we come up the walk to her house? she asked. She wanted us to see some pictures she had painted. We might know some big store in America that would handle them.

The woman had a racket.

She made delicate little copies, in colored paints, of old prints, covered them with a trace of dust and then turned them over wholesale to a man in Paris who sold them piece by

piece to bookshops, where delighted tourists stumbled upon them as genuine old paintings of a Paris which existed long before the Louvre was finished, a Paris of the time when the banks of the Seine were open to the sky, bordered by fields unhemmed in by modern apartments and high buildings covered with soot.

The backs of the pictures she pasted over with part of the pages of old French books. The effect was charming.

We looked about her home, filled with all the bric-a-brac of departed generations. Her father had been a wood-carver and a soulptor. A great, life-like boar's head thrust his fierce snout at us from a wall. A buck's head with antlers looked down with death-glazed eyes from a place above the doorway.

"And here," she pointed out, her eyes alight, " as you have perhaps observed, I immortalize my passion. In all these little pictures, you will see, always, the little fisherman."

We saw, in all the little pictures, the little fisherman, a miniature of life, not always carefully drawn but always present, patiently standing, or patiently sitting, a wand pole in his hand, and a blue river flowing by,

containing the suggestion of schools of subtle, unhooked fish.

"If you hear of any firm in America. . ."

* * *

We crossed the other bridge. The hot sun, which on the river had made me giddy those few instants in the canoe, was sinking over the trees beyond the railroad tracks. We found a table at the bathing pavilion near the water. The radio for the moment was silent.

In a roped-in place, sheltered from the main current, a few timid swimmers were splashing about, and from our table and our glasses we could watch them in the darkening water.

The twilight deepened and we sat without words.

Across the bend of the river, beyond where the quiet water of the swimming pool was, the main stream, steel in the pearl of twilight, cut swiftly past. A fish splashed once or twice, flapping the surface, and disappearing. The château, amid its trees, peered up stream toward us, into the light sweep of water. We sat a long time.

Once, I thought I saw the waiters, in their white coats, standing together in the garden, looking over at us.

The short Frenchman. He had had his *bellyfull*. *Les jeunes sont toujours patriotiques* . .

The boy was a White. Brought up in one way. Others in others. . . We were lost, perhaps. All of us. In any case. But to be young and on the losing side, outside, cut off. But where was there peace nowadays? Even so.

Even the stillness in the air seemed oppressive. The accumulation of the day. Pregnant. Heavy, like close air to asthmatics. And Paris, . . with its blanket of sultriness. But would Germany, then, have vitality? Directed hope? Crossed words, tangles, all this forest we are in. Living together, foregoing more defining holds. Why? And just sitting. . . Waiting? But sitting, untried, and. I can no longer sit here. I cannot sit here any longer.

I can't sit here. I. ..

I feel the cold water, shocked with the plunge. This is it! To begin! To swim. Out! Now. To cross. To DO this thing. To beat it.

Hard! With fists. With me!

To SWIM!

My God!

I am in the middle of the river! My shoes are heavy with the water. My knee has a bullet ball in it. I cannot breathe. Steel waves of horses charge upon me. I am going under!

Whose eyes? These. Blue, curious, serious, hurt, puzzled? What youth? Where?

I am hauled out of the river. I am drowning! I am saved. . .

All my muscles fag. I sit gazing into nothing, expectacy has gone. A tension is no more. . . There was no storm, only something curious, a burst of sudden wind among loose papers on the ground, whirling, mad undercurrents in the air. . .

The two white-coated figures in the darkness of the garden of the chateau moved.

"I think it would be better to eat in Paris tonight," I suggested.

"The chateau is expensive," said my friend.

"We don't want sociology on a day in the country," I mumbled.

"What?" asked my friend, who had not quite heard.

We were paying the bill.

There was no way of saying, understandably, one is a little mad, beneath the weight of worlds.

As we walked over the bridge the soft waters of the Oise were lost below us in the still blackness.

At the chateau, the waiters were standing together in the light, looking out toward the roadway, their napkins on their arms, dully expecting diners yet to come. When they saw us pass, they bowed, slightly, in recognition. And a faint feeling of sickness tightened at my stomach.

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Portrait Of A Contemporary

at 70-odd

••

"The soul of life to me has always been
love of women and admiration of
great men."

---Frank Harris, in the
preface to Vol. II
of "MY LIFE."

- - -

He had begun with politics, the intensity of the interest in his damnation of the egotistic Mussolini having brought him close to my knees which now and then to emphasize a point he struck definingly with his strong, practical looking hand. Once or twice from his seat on a chaise-longue he pulled at my chair, twisting me around to burn me with the long-gazed force of his declarations.

And then through the French debts and damnation of the prejudiced critics of Straight-Forward Literature in the English-speaking world. And, arising, my host stood for a moment, dramatically, surveying the scope of his subjects. The afternoon sun of Nice, slanting through the windows, fell upon his erect, strong figure, his dark blue suit with its fine white stripe, his sport shoes white with ornate yellow leather trimmings, his neat, precise and puissant totality.

Before that afternoon I had never seen the man.

"You devil!" he had greeted me, "sit down. You choose the very worst possible time to call on me. This is when I sleep. Didn't you know that?"

I had begun to leave, offering my apologies for having accepted his written invitation to come to see him "at once." I was over-ruled. I sank back, and as my host strode about with characteristically vital steps, halting suddenly now and then to bore me through with vigorons assertiveness, I felt my own self losing itself, the paucity of my youth grossly apparent among the long housed bric-a-brac of many intellects.

My host continued.

"I said to Caillaux," he said, grasping my knee, "'It's as plain as the nose on your face.' I told Caillaux how to solve his French debts. . . No wonder Italy lets a Mussolini come in and rule her. Wouldn't any country these times--when everybody stands around helpless--if a man, I don't care what kind of one, rose up and said, 'I'll make your money good, I'll make good times, I'll do this, I'll do that?'

"But---Caillaux wouldn't listen to me . . ."

I lost the voice of my host among the faces of Messrs. Chesterton, Bennett and Wells, faces drawn in caricature and fronting on me from their separate frames on a patchwork wall of pictures. And then, beyond a copy of an English periodical (the cover pencil-marked at a review of my host's latest work) my eyes fell on the drooping eyes of Oscar Wilde languidly looking out of a faded sepia print--the tired eyes of sophistication.

My host ended another verbal paragraph and then noticing my glance he strode to the wall of trophies.

"You should see some of these things,"

he said.

He rested his hand on a small clay figurine, a woman in loose Greek robes.

"Genuine Tanagra," he said. "Got it in Algeria more than fifty years ago."

"Fifty years ago!"

"Yes---1876!"

He beamed good-naturedly and turned on his heel, emphatically a preserved figure of a man, his eyes concentrated into points as his thoughts focused on his life, his large mouth firm, a full-blown moustache still audaciously black and whisked into rigidity, and his hair, although greying glossily, yet rich in texture, luxuriantly waved across his head.

"I'm 70-odd," he added. He was blossoming. "Seventy-odd, not just seventy!"

I was impressed.

"Of course you know how I do it?" The eyes of Oscar Wilde stared at us, a dreamy, quiet disdain of all once-cherished ephemerality.

"No."

His attention, for the moment, was diverted. The maid, black-haired, smart in her neat white uniform, slipped in with the Paris Herald and

and the continental edition of the Chicago Tribune. Her master accorded her a smile. She tiptoed from his presence.

"You know," he continued, "once I used to write bits for a paper in London and one day the editor said to me, 'Frank, why don't you write us something funny? There's great demand for it.' 'All right', I said, 'but I must have ten guineas for it, not the usual five.' 'Very well,' he said. 'And I must be paid now in advance, if you want it.' 'All right,' he said. SO I went home and later brought him back a piece. It started:

"'Most everyone is willing, even anxious, to give you advice on the wife you choose. But wives, it seems to me, are not so very important. Any kind of a wife will do. What seems to me to be important is advice on what kind of parents a man chooses.

"'Now I should say this is a great responsibility and one must choose as follows: First they must be young and in love with each other. And then the father should be a sailor. For a sailor is seldom at home, often away on the sea for three years on end. And when he

does return, he is capable of making A MAN!'"

"I must say," my host concluded, "although I got paid well enough, the article never appeared."

He returned to the little object still in his hand.

"She lost her head in Nice here," he fingered the charming Tanagra, "and they chipped the base in New York."

"Is that a Cimabue there?" I asked.

"It is. And there's a Matisse."

A pencil sketch, jeune fille, recumbent, stomach upward, nude, signed. We passed on.

"But here's the real thing," he said, stopping before a newly framed picture. "Matisse stood half an hour in front of that. 'Frank,' he said to me, 'that's lovely. What is it, actually, an etching or a dry-point?' Ha, ha!"

"It is a question." We edged toward the drawing of the lady, recumbent, stomach upward, eyes rounded, naval rounded, knee-caps rounded, all in a rain of fine sepia lines.

"The answer is," he said, leaning over closer, "it's both. Both! Ha, ha! Etched in straight lines as it should be--and then carefully

gone over, dry point. Marvelous thing! A Zorn. He said to me, 'Frank, here's a masterpiece. There's nothing else exactly like it in the world. I know you can appreciate it. Here, I'm giving it to you!"

"And here's a Cellini." A diminutive bronze tilted in his large hands. As he talked, balancing it in his hand, his thumb stroked the back muscles. "There's vitality." Slowly the little man turned before our gaze, revealing the chaste fig-leaf, compactly put, the buttocks, dimpled at the sides from drawn-up intenseness.

"And there," he continued, "is the finest Oriental bit I've ever seen. Whistler said to me, as he looked at that fan, 'Frank, that's perfect--frame and all. And I don't doubt you got it just as it was.' I did. It's perfect. Frame and all . . . in Japan. What better could be imagined? Black, gold and grey, with the peacock there in the center, so. . . the little Japanese poem at the side. Whistler knew. 'They said I learned from the Chinese,' Whistler told me, 'but I didn't. I like that sort of thing; and I've seen quite a little of it. But I was never influenced by it.'"

"But here's something you really ought to see. Augustus Caesar--of the time."

"Of the time, hmmmm!"

"Bought it in a little town in northern Italy for 100 lire. The Museum of Naples offered me a thousand.

"But come in here. Lots of things. Whole attic full. You'll have to come up and see it. Sometime. You could write it up, maybe, for your paper. There's a story. . . almost as good as the book. . .

"Lovely virgin," he shot over his shoulder, side-throwing an explanatory hand at a life sized wooden madonna with child standing mute and smiling as she had stood for five hundred years before she came to grace the atelier of the author now at 70!odd.

"And there is a Rodin by Rodin. He gave it to me. And there's Renoir by Renoir, given to me just before he died. And Cecil Rhodes. A Great Man! I guess that's the best Cecil Rhodes in existence. And there's the little statue of him that Tweed did. And there's Uncle Woodrow! Uncle Woodrow--in the life,--as he wanted them to see him! Thumbs in the armpits of his vest;

the very caricature of mankind. My God! I got that in 1916 in Washington. On sale all over at the time. Look at it . Isn't it monstrous? I got it for that reason. A man that occupied a time like no other in history. The greatest chance in history for a man. And what did he do? Kissed England's bottom!

"I remember when Otto Kahn came back from Europe he felt pretty strongly that we ought to get into the mess. "Frank,' he said to me, 'you know this is getting pretty bad. They're going to wipe out France. Good God, man, we ought to do something, not sit back here like this! What can we do?' 'Well,' I said, 'personally I think the Germans ought at least to get a square deal. (They'd whipped the whole world. I thought they ought to get a draw, anyway.) I said, 'But if that's the way you feel about it there's only one thing to do and that's to go right down to Washington and tell Wilson what you think.'

"Well, he went to Washington and talked to Woodrow. After he'd been talking awhile, he said: 'Since you haven't made any response or asked any questions, I assume you agree with me,

Mr. Wilson, in what I've said. You agree, perhaps, about this--and that--. You see what ----.'

"'Mr. Kahn,' said Mr. Wilson, (my host placed his hands preacher-wise and affected a drawling high-pitched tone of voice),-- "'For the last three years I have forced myself to think of other matters. I have avoided contact with other intellects. I find that contact with any other intellect devitalizes me.'"

"'My God,' said Kahn, 'that was just what I'd been waiting for him to say. 'Contact with any other intellect devitalized him!' My God! The ---- - ------! I could have put a bullet through his stomach!'

"Well," my host sighed, returning to the grotesque long-legged statuette, the type of the Mutt and Jeff and the Bringing Up Father miniatures one sees in the toy shops, "there he is as he wished others to see him."

He revolved Mr. Wilson in his fingers and then set him back upon the mantlepiece, a sharp smile dominating us, a sharp nose jutting out above us, the figurine's thumbs in his waistcoat armpits, feet widespread, surveying the

notables of numerous nations.

"And there's Tolstoi," my host pointed to a pencil drawing of the old man, wide-winged in the nose, beady-eyed, strange. "Done by his son and given to me. And there's Verlaine. And Wagner. And dear old Heine.

"And here's a letter, in this frame, signed by the Duke of Wellington. In a smaller frame I had one of Napoleon's but it got lost in moving. The carter said to me, 'Was there really a letter there?' 'Yes,' said I, 'there was really a letter there --- from Napoleon the Great!' 'I'm awfully sorry,' he said, 'but I didn't take it. I didn't see it !' Ha,ha. From Napoleon the Great ! Well . . . it's gone. When I was a boy something serious happened to me and I said to myself then, 'Frank ! if that had happened to anybody else you'd have laughed at it. Sometimes the laugh doesn't go very deep --- but ----. Come in here. You asked about my Book. I'll show you.

"I was not joking when I told you the price. Lots of people -- I get letters every day -- write in and enclose their fifteen dollars and beg for copies. It's a good book. The

second volume, I have no hesitation in saying it, is the greatest presentation of a life ever written."

We entered the bedroom, the brass bed still in process of composition under the hands of a fluffy haired little French maid. A pink silk comforter and a spread of cream lace were rumpled at the foot. The room's walls glowed with Life. On the wall at the head of the bed, at the right, were women of the last century, in gilt frames or without the gilt frames, half - draped, in toilette preparation. Flung around the rest of the room, at all elevations, the ladies were, like Art, ageless, and naked, style-less, or, always in style. Looking down upon the bed from the wall was one, severed at the knees but otherwise totally apparent, and elsewhere were ladies full-face, rear-face, side-face, seated, kneeling , recumbent, prone and supine, and on the eastern wall one, among many, so seat-ed as to have almost more than mere pictorial significance.

As my host bent over to extract a copy of his book from a broken packing case, one's associative faculties brooded.

"Of course," one said, "you've got around to reading that book of Joyce's. . ."

My host straightened up suddenly, with his book in his hand.

"Yes. A poor book. Not a single good seduction in it. Six pages that were worth writing. Outside of that --- nothing. If my book isn't better than that I'll let them burn it. They do burn it in England. In the United States they confiscate them, and then sell them against me. Bookleg them, you know."

One recalled what the critics said of Ulysses --- the concluding soliloquy of Mrs. Bloom.

"Oh, yes, the prostitute in the end ?" he agreed. "No, that isn't what I meant. That's no good. A Prostitute's Musings. No. What I meant was six pages describing a girl . . . yearning to show everything she has to the man she loves. Beautifully done. But, also, impossible. You know, there isn't a woman in the world that would do a thing like that.

"Why, look," he seized my arm. "Once I went into Central Africa. I took a thousand pictures. No trouble at all. Girls would drop," he

put his hand on his groin, "their tablier," he paused on the word, "without any hesitation at all. And let you photograph them any way you pleased. Absolutely dumb. Stupid. Savage. Why, they couldn't recognize their own pictures, nor the photographs of their brothers or sisters or fathers or mothers. Tried a week. Finally I took a picture of one of them, with a crazy white beard, deformed, distinctive altogether, I showed th . that and they recognized him - the only one. 'Oh, ah, why, that's so and so,' they said. Well, now even those people had modesty. They'd let you photograph them naked, but the women covered themselves with a little patch and ask them to take that off, and they'd hum and haw and twist around and refuse.

"And here Joyce has a 16-year-old girl . . . . Well, you know. I said to him, 'Joyce, do you mean to tell me that a Dublin girl, 16 years old and in love with a man and raised to boot in the Holy Mother Church would want to do a thing like that?'

"'Yes,' he said. 'Well,' I said, 'you're crazy. There's Emma Goldman. She's lived a lot. She's a wise woman. We'll ask her!' We did.

'Frank's right,' she said. And it's true. Think it would scare the man away if he loved her. Think he'd think her ugly. I know. 'Well,' said Joyce, 'she'd been with another man. She wasn't a virgin.' 'Makes no difference.' 'Well,' Joyce concluded,'I know a girl who did do it. So there you are.' I don't believe it. . .

"But that's all that is interesting in the book. The Portrait of the Artist is a better book. More to it. But Joyce has done good things. That - - - Dubliners. . . But now if my book here isn't better than Ulysses you can have it. I speak from seniority, of course, I'm considerably older than Joyce.

"But --- I'm not modest. I told Wilde once that modesty was the figleaf of ugliness. Only people who are ugly are modest. They have something to hide.

"Anyway, there it is," he said, opening the volume in his hand and displaying inside the illustrations rose, a la Vie Parisienne. "Had them done in Germany."

The pages passed in a little whirr under his fingers. Here and there he stopped their

flight, pausing over a lady, recumbent, pink-toned, naked, with her hair around her shoulders, her body warm-toned in the print. "Rather nice, eh? Too much for the English, though. McBride said to me, 'Frank, put in those illustrations and I'll sell 2,000 copies in Chicago in two weeks.' Well, I put th the illustrations. But I didn't in the second volume. The second volume is a big piece of work. Nothing like it. Oh, a few rough drawings, of course. But just sketches, very conventional, at the ends of chapters and so on, you know.

"Am I doing anything for Mencken? No, not right now. You wrote for the Smart Set? Is that so? So did I. Maybe you've seen my things there. Of course! ..... Well . . . I made lots of money with Pearsons. Maybe I'll do it again. Lots of money. Until Burleson drove me out. Held up the magazine in the mails all the time you know. It was all right -- five days, ten days. I was too wise for him. Hold it up and I'd advance the date of publication and keep on advancing it. But once he held it up for thirty-seven days and that ended it. Thought there was something seditious in it.

It kept me dashing down to Washington all the time. 'Frank,' he'd say. . . What? No, Mencken wants stuff on Americans. Wrote me, 'Frank,we'll take anything you've got, or can give us, on Americans.' Well . . . John Reed, now. Who cares about John Reed? He's dead. And I don't know anything good I can say about any Americans. All I could say would be raps. And I don't particularly care to rap 'em.

"WHen I was editor of the Saturday Review, the greatest assembly of literary men in history, I had a policy, and I believed in sticking to it. There was Shaw and Wells and Rowe and oh, everybody else. I called a dinner and I said: 'Gentlemen, it has come to my attention that people outside have started to call it the Saturday Reviler. Well, this sort of thing doesn't get us any place. Hereafter the Saturday Review is going to try to find stars, and if it can't find stars, it won't merely hurl bricks. What good does it do? Insults, raps, knocks ! Mainly lies. Nobody'll remember them in fifty years. If we can't do something constructive,' I said, ' we won't do anything.' Well, it worked.

"Well, I printed the first stuff of Beer-

bohm, Wells. Why, who ever heard of Shaw before then --- Shaw the Socialist, the play critic? Wells hadn't written a single book at that time. We had an Englishman on the staff, reviewing. Oxford man, well-read, so on. I gave him a book and he turned back a review of it, damning it. 'Frank,' he said, 'this is terrible. It's no good.' 'Let me see the book,' I said. I took it and opened it. 'Why man,' I said,' give me that review.' And I took it and threw it away. 'We can't use that,' I said. 'Why the first paragraph shows the man can write. Why, look at it. Listen to it! . . Wells,' I said, 'here's a book. Read it and see if you can't do something about it, if it deserves it.' A few days later Wells came back to the office. 'Frank,' he said, 'You told me to write a column and a half on that book. I've written five pages.'

"'Well,' I said, 'what? Praising it?'

'Yes, praising it.' 'Give it to me,' I said. 'I can use it.' I did. That was the first review of Almayer's Folly. Conrad told me later that the review <u>made him</u>. It did. He wrote a lot afterward, but Almayer's Folly was one of his best. Well, that's something, now. <u>I</u> didn't

think quite as much of the book as Wells did, but the man could write.

"You know, just before you came, there was another American here. Brought me four or five stories. And a marvelous thing ! Absolutely unheard of ! One was a masterpiece ! One of the most unusual stories I've ever seen. The rest, third rate stuff.

"Here! You're a newspaperman. I'll give you a copy of my book. Wait a minute. I'll inscribe it, if this crazy French pen of mine will work. Look at it. Isn't it beautiful ? Ornate as possible and useless as they make 'em. Like everything else French, almost. Yes, French pastry, lingerie, etc., you're right. Except French girls. Don't you dare to say anything against French girls. They know how to work, all right.

"There. And there's the couplet that inspired the work. 'Death closes all; yet something ere the end, 'Some work of noble worth may yet be done.'

"Ah, a marvelous sentiment." He left me and walked up and down the room, his hands behind his back. "'Death closes all . . .'

Well, it's too late for a siesta, and my second secretary is coming in a few minutes, anyway. It's all right. . . I'm going to have the reading of my play in a few nights. I'll invite you over. I saw Shaw's 'Joan' --- three fools sitting around a table for three hours talking about nothing. Talky, talky, the very worst kind. No life, no feeling, no fire. God! I've done another Joan of Arc. If it hasn't got more to it than Shaw's, I'll quit !"

I emerged into the quiet dusk of the Nicois winter afternoon. I was carrying down the hill The Book. All nature lay back in silence.

...

118 BANBURY ROAD
OXFORD
TELEPHONE: 5782

May 16. 1931.

The Editors of Story.

Dear Sirs:—

I ask your formal permission to reprint

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by Whit Burnett.

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Edward J. O'Brien